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RAJIV GANDHI SPEAKS

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ALBERT SHANKER, FROM MONSTER TO STATESMAN • REAGAN'S TAX-REFORM SELLOUT

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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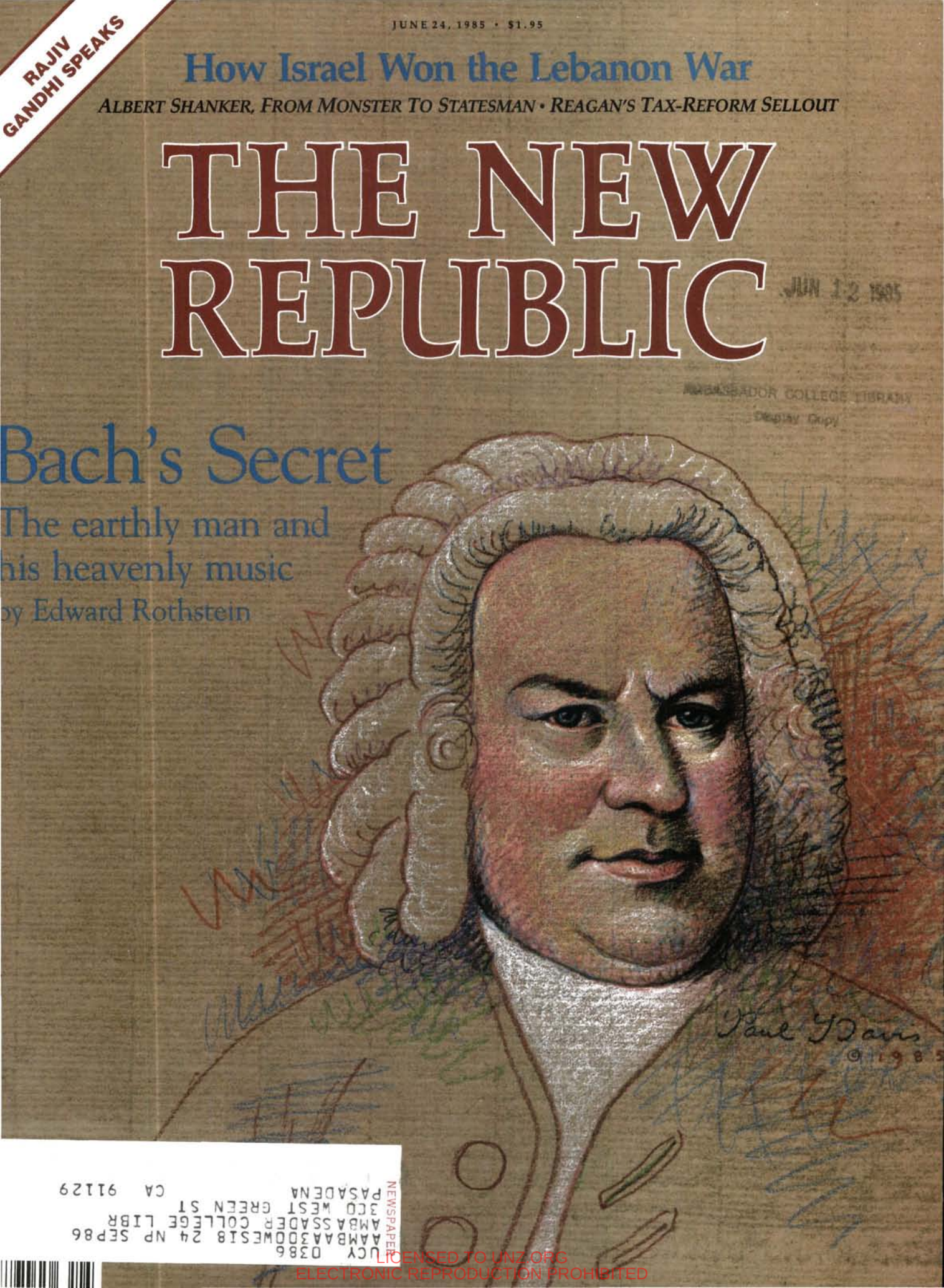
by Edward Rothstein



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CORRESPONDENCE

TOO GREASY

To the editors:

TRB's offensive and ill-informed article on child sexual abuse ("Greasy Kid Stuff," May 13) contains much tasteless language and many inaccuracies. First, no one is trying "heroically" to prove an increase in the prevalence of child sexual abuse. The phenomenon is not new, just newly recognized. Second, the "lurid tales of pedophilic orgies in a small Minnesota town" did indeed occur, according to the physicians and social workers who visited there. Children almost *never* lie about sexual abuse, but they often falsely recant their stories when they see the horrified reaction of adults around them. Third, your statistic that one out of 100 children suffers abuse or neglect is preposterous. A recent study interviewing 930 adult women found 28 percent had been sexually abused by age 14 (this does not include cases of exhibitionism) and two-thirds of these reports involved violence or the threat of violence.

We may be raising children to be more fearful, but child sexual abuse is a tragic fact of life, just like rape, assault, and robbery. We adults fear these things and take precautions against them. Children deserve the same protection.

DANIEL S. FRANK
Los Angeles, California

CHERRY PICKING

To the editors:

In Robert Brustein's article "Musical Chairs" (April 29), concerning the David Mamet "adaptation" of Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard*, Mr. Brustein appears to give his support to Mr. Mamet's adaptation because of its determination to "excise anything unnatural or literary from the play's language, an act of deconstruction designed to exhume the living energies of Chekhov's writing. . . . The dialogue is a series of interrupted sentences, random hesitations, odd emphases, overlapping lines . . ." Mr. Brustein goes on to praise Mamet's ear for dialogue ("the dialogue is always authentic and convincing") and to quote a passage from Mr. Mamet's halting, truncated script.

What Mr. Mamet and Mr. Brustein fail to respect is the simple fact that Chekhov wrote in complete sentences. In his heavy cutting and reducing of Chekhov's poetic realism to an "almost Chicagoized idiom" Mr. Mamet has minimized Chekhov's play to little good theatrical effect.

JOHN LOGAN
Chicago, Illinois

WEAVER'S WOES

To the editors:

The brief article by James Weaver ("The Sky Is Falling," May 13) elicits a certain degree of ambivalence. On the one hand, I am tempted to ignore the polemic in view of the fact that it is wholly unsupported by any specific data. On the other, as a sitting congressman, Mr. Weaver has a certain amount of power and influence he might use to bring about changes that would prevent his prediction from becoming reality. I would hope that he is not sitting around in Congress waiting to say "I told you so" if a disaster ensues.

S. ALLAN BOCK
Denver, Colorado

NO SENSE IN PIECE

To the editors:

Mark Crispin Miller's review of *No Sense of Place* ("Down the Tubes," April 22) so badly twists and distorts the contents of my book that I must set the record straight on several key points. There is no utopian thesis in *No Sense of Place*, as the title alone would suggest to the average reader. Indeed, I describe in many places how new patterns of communication have led to increased unrest, alienation, apathy, and discord. And I explicitly correct readers who would "mistake any discussion of the 'breaking down of boundaries among people' for a prophecy of a utopian society of harmony and bliss."

I do not "simply ignore TV's cultural and ideological background." Indeed, I frequently discuss the issue of how "media do not develop and grow in a vacuum." But I also demonstrate that the traditional studies of the roots and content of television have not done much to illuminate the impact of new media on the structure of social interactions. There is more to examine about the massive infusion of electronics in our lives than Miller's concern with programming strategies to "keep every viewer in the anxious mood to buy."

Miller horrendously misrepresents my views by claiming that I assert "repeatedly that there is no difference at all between direct experience and the simulacra beamed at us by the networks." Miller mistakes my analyses of information form for discussions of program quality. When I observe that children can recognize a human face on television before they know how to read the word "face," I am not suggesting, as Miller would have it, that I take "TV's images for reality itself" and dismiss " 'print' images as inherently false." Even in discussing the different forms of messages in different media, I describe how "all media act as filters that exclude aspects of 'reality' " and how different media distort live experience in different ways.

Miller implies that I suggest television has provided us with "true" images of Ronald Reagan and others who perform via the tube. Nothing could be further from my frequently stated view that "we now have different performances rather than more or less performance; we have a different reality rather than a different measure of reality." He also quotes me out of context in a number of instances. He suggests, for example, that my view that electronic media "lead to a form of interaction that was once found exclusively in immediate physical interaction" is a discussion of the quality of relationships and of the basic "reality" of television. In fact, this quote is drawn from an analysis of how the form of messages in many electronic media gives us the *illusion* of "knowing" or "meeting" someone. As many arguments in my book demonstrate, I do not equate mediated interactions with real ones ("The 'company' provided by a radio or television or computer can also be viewed as a new form of solitary confinement"). What Miller apparently has missed is that I argue that the new ways in which we receive and send messages have begun to influence the ways in which we think about ourselves, use real space, and behave in face-to-face encounters.

In short, there is hardly a quote or paraphrase of my ideas in Miller's review that bears close relationship to what I have actually written. Miller at-

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FROM WASHINGTON

THE DOCTOR-LAWYER WAR

The war between doctors and lawyers has broken out again. The issue is medical malpractice. The doctors claim that huge lawsuits and galloping insurance premiums are driving them out of business. The lawyers respond huffily, snottily, "There is a medical malpractice problem. It is too much medical malpractice." Like the war between Iran and Iraq, it's hard for an outsider to choose sides in this one because both parties are so unattractive.

The last eruption on this battlefield was a decade ago, after which the doctors persuaded more than 40 states to pass laws making malpractice suits more difficult. The lawyers responded by developing ever-grander theories and techniques to produce large dollar judgments. Now things are worse than ever, from the doctors' point of view.

At the time of the last malpractice "crisis" in 1975, the average award or settlement had skyrocketed in five years from $5,000 to $26,000. Today, according to the American Medical Association, it's $330,000. In California, it's $650,000. In 1975 there were five malpractice claims for every 100 doctors. By 1983 it was 16. Malpractice insurance now costs $55,000 a year for an obstetrician on Long Island and over $100,000 for a neurosurgeon.

In addition, doctors assert, fear of lawyers forces them to practice "defensive medicine"—conducting needless tests and procedures that carry their own risks and cost the nation more than $15 billion a year in extra health care costs. They say fear of litigation drives a psychological wedge between doctors and their patients.

Whereas a decade ago it was still hard to find a doctor willing to testify against a colleague, today doctors specializing in "expert testimony" advertise their services in legal journals at rates of $3,000 a day. They are prepared to tell juries about the very latest medical techniques that a practicing doctor may have failed to use.

As a dropout lawyer, I am willing to believe almost any charge against the legal profession. This time, though, the lawyers have a strong rebuttal. Malpractice costs have increased, they say, but so have other aspects of health care, including doctors' incomes. As a percentage of total health care costs, malpractice premiums have held steady at about one-half of one percent. In 1983, they say, the average American spent $1,500 on health care, of which only six dollars went to pay malpractice insurance premiums.

The insurance nightmare stories, the lawyers say, are unrepresentative. The average doctor spends only 2.9 percent of his gross income on malpractice premiums. As the Trial Lawyers Association tartly points out, this 2.9 percent "is just slightly more than the 2.3% spent on 'professional car upkeep.' " Even the average neurosurgeon spends only 5.8 percent. And this out of an average gross income of $200,000—far more for a neurosurgeon. (The net after office expenses is about half that.) The lawyers ask, "Where is the crisis?"

As for "defensive medicine," the lawyers point out that even the doctors' $15 billion figure comes down to $1.19 per week for the average American. Of course almost any number can be made to seem fairly modest if you divide it by 240 million and then divide it again by 52. But the lawyers argue that defensive medicine is what any sensible patient wants his doctor to practice anyway.

The New York Times, which sides unabashedly with the doctors, ran a typically weepy story the other day about how upstate New York obstetricians, orthopedists, and neurosurgeons have been "forced to restrict their practices" because "they can no longer afford malpractice insurance premiums." A close reading of the story reveals that what's actually going on is a strike. The president-elect of the state medical society "stressed . . . that there was no concerted action. . . . 'They have to do this on an individual basis,' he said. 'Otherwise they would be violating the Sherman Antitrust Law.' " And yet 80 percent of the orthopedists around Buffalo and all the obstetricians in Albany have independently decided to stop or curtail their practices July 1, when the latest in-

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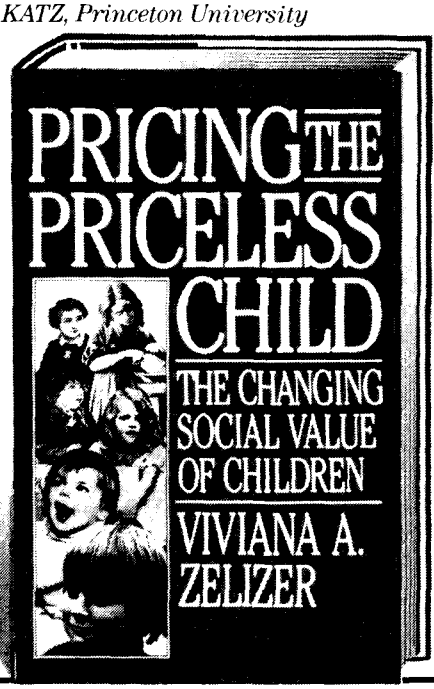

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
JUNE 24, 1985

APPOINTMENT WITH THE IRREDENTIST

In a sudden reversal of its wise decision not to impose American designs upon the Middle East peace process, the Reagan administration has turned to a form of diplomatic activism that borders on mischief. To be sure, there is nothing more devoutly to be wished upon the Arabs and the Israelis than peace. But peace is not an abstraction; it depends on security. Serious peace talks require the participation of Jordan and of those Palestinians who do wish to make peace. (They also require the absence of Palestinians who don't want peace, who only come to the peace table to mislead and mock.) A bad peace is not better than the present state of non-war, and a poorly conceived peace process will only diminish the prospects of what it seeks to achieve.

The Reagan administration peace process is poorly conceived. In return for the king of Jordan's assurance that Yasir Arafat has assured him that he, Arafat, now accepts U.N. resolutions 242 and 338—the legalistic reference points for previous Middle East diplomacy—the United States appears prepared to revive Arafat's political power and to restore the Soviet Union to an utterly undeserved prominence in Middle Eastern affairs. This would destroy the confidence of Israel in the United States as a reliable friend who will not belittle the Jewish state's well-founded anxieties for the sake of the State Department's greater, and transient, glory.

The American collaboration in the resuscitation of Yasir Arafat is what's hardest to believe. The war in Lebanon dramatically reduced Arafat's stature, both in the world of nations and within the Palestinian community. Arafat has been deprived of his arsenal and of his access to an Israeli border. He's been betrayed by the Syrians and by large segments of his own movement. He's been forced into the embrace of the uneasy Hussein, who drove Arafat out of Jordan in 1970 and is his only real competition for the authority to speak for the Palestinians. The blow to Arafat, moreover, was also a blow to the Soviet Union, whose satrap he has been for years. There is nothing in the American interest to justify the present American acquiescence in his political and diplomatic rehabilitation.

Nor is there anything in the Israeli interest, to put it mildly. The rehabilitation of Arafat has again involved that tiresome exercise of which some people never tire: portraying this resolute terrorist as a "moderate." He is said to have exchanged "armed struggle" for the "political option." False, false, false. For example, earlier this spring the Israelis thwarted the most ambitious act of Palestinian terrorism in a long time. They identified and destroyed a boat off the Israeli coast that was carrying members of Fatah and a cache of arms to the shore of Tel Aviv. That's right, Fatah: Yasir Arafat's organization, famous among students of Palestinian politics as the PLO's "mainstream." The fact that Israel stopped the murderers should not obscure the fact that the PLO sent the murderers.

The reintroduction of Arafat into this equation is

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especially bad news for Palestinian Arabs. He may be their folk hero, but he has wrought them little save disaster. Even from faraway Tunis, he has caused death to rain on them in the Lebanese camps. And why? Because once more he chose the armed option, something Lebanon's Shiites wouldn't tolerate. The fixation on Arafat's assent to any peace talks gives him a veto power on their outcome. For the Palestinians, nothing could be more tragic. His history and his predicament bind him to delusions of a victory he cannot have. The American eagerness for his approbation makes negotiations hostage to his irredentism and extremism. And that is how the genuine moderates and realists among the Palestinian Arabs will read it too. No encouragement to peace in that.

THE AMERICAN tolerance of the king of Jordan's insistence on "umbrella" negotiations is equally puzzling. (There is realistic suspicion in Washington that all of Hussein's hoopla about breakthroughs to peace is meant to clear the path of congressional objections to his shopping list for advanced weapons; the State Department always wants to sell Hussein weapons.) Hussein is adamant—as both Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak, more realistic men, have not been—that the negotiations take place under the aegis of the five permanent members of the Security Council. That means the Soviet Union. In recent years the Soviet Union has been the nemesis of peace in the Middle East. It has armed the PLO and the Syrians, the latter with weaponry that constitutes an unprecedented escalation of the arms race in the region. It has encouraged both to stand fast against any prospect of a political settlement of their respective conflicts with Israel. What exactly are the Soviet Union's credentials, then, for sitting at a peace table? Israel, Egypt, and the United States did quite well without Soviet participation the last time around. China, too, has a permanent seat on the Security Council. But, like the USSR, China doesn't even maintain diplomatic relations with Israel. What, then, are the credentials of the two Communist superpowers as intermediaries? Exactly nothing.

The Israelis are nervous, and with good reason. Suddenly they are faced with the prospect of American pressure for a meeting with PLO-allied Palestinians (the distinction between the PLO and the Palestinian National Council is casuistry) in the company of the Soviet Union. The Americans, moreover, seem quite pleased to meet with these people themselves. Apparently Ronald Reagan has yet to learn the lesson that Jimmy Carter learned at Camp David: unless the Israelis are willing to deal, there will be no deal; and the Israelis won't be willing to deal unless Israel has complete trust in the United States.

It remains a basic fact of Israel's life that in its part of the world it is politically weak, accepted by its neighbors for reason of its military strength and their military weakness and for no other reason. The territorial compromise that will be required of Israel during a negotiation—even the smallest territorial compromise—will restore Israel to a more extreme degree of exposure to its enemies. Such are the geographical and strategic realities of "Palestine." To be sure, Israel would decide that peace is worth the risk; Shimon Peres certainly will take great risks. Israel, already under Menachem Begin, made such a decision at Camp David. And inevitably there will be a risk now. Nothing the United States can do would better serve the peace process, therefore, than to reassure Israel that we understand the anxiety, and will do what we can to allay it.

The present American policy, however, aggravates Israel's anxiety. And to what end? Does anyone imagine that a delegation certified by Arafat—one including, for example, the Morningside Heights revolutionary, Professor Edward Said—is capable of accepting the kind of territorial compromise that is realistic 18 years after the Six Days War? There is no longer any point, after all, of talk about returning to the 1967 borders "with minor rectifications" or of restoring the unnatural *status quo ante* in Jerusalem. This may once have been possible, but Arab rejectionism eroded the possibility. That map, then, is as obsolete as those old maps, much cherished by the Arabs, without Israel at all. Still, if the king of Jordan wishes to speak to the prime minister of Israel, he is only a short distance away. If the Palestinians of the West Bank wish to do the same, they are even closer. We have no doubt that if it is peace they wish to speak about, Israel's prime minister will wish to speak to them, too. But the stakes are too high to tolerate intriguing diplomats and ingratiating terrorists. The peace process will be hurt, not helped, by the presence at the table of those whose interest in the Middle East has always been in the war process.

NOTEBOOK

□ TAX REFORM WATCH: We intend to keep a squinty eye on the progress of tax reform, not just because it's an important issue in its own right, but also because it's a wonderful lens through which to study the condition of American democracy, 1985-style. Robert McIntyre analyzes the big picture—the overall effect of President Reagan's revised proposal—on page 9. Meanwhile, though, a few small observations:

- Everyone is remarking, not without cynicism, on the amazing overnight transformation of Dan Rostenkowski, Democratic chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, from Chicago machine hack to twinkly, benevolent elder statesman. After a long career spent putting loopholes in the tax code, he's suddenly discovered the virtues of simplicity and fairness. It's amazing, true enough. But what about Ronald Reagan's amazing transformation? "The free rides are over," he declared

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in his television speech, addressing popular resentment at the fact that many profitable corporations pay no tax at all. Now some problems with the tax code have been around for decades, but that scandal in particular dates precisely to Reagan's first tax bill of 1981. The Reaganites would like to present tax reform as a continuation of their 1981 tax cut. Yet the rhetoric, if not the reality, of their current campaign is a direct repudiation of that mistake.

• It is also ironic to hear Treasury Secretary James Baker and other Reaganites argue against the deduction for state and local taxes on the grounds that this is a "subsidy" of high-tax states by low-tax states. For years liberals have labeled various tax loopholes as "subsidies," only to be upbraided by enraged conservatives for assuming that every dollar belongs to the government. Allowing someone to keep more of his own money is not a "subsidy," they scolded. Suddenly, though, when the beneficiary is state government, a deduction is a "subsidy" again.

• Perhaps the silliest change between the original Treasury plan and Reagan's amended version is in the treatment of expensive restaurant meals. Instead of a simple cap on the deduction of business meals, Reagan proposes to limit the deduction to $25 per meal plus half the difference between $25 and the actual cost. The business sybarites' lobby will be on firm ground in calling this rule a bookkeeping nightmare. It has "amend me" written all over it. Surely a simple $25-per-meal limit is generous enough, without this preposterous complication.

• This week's Pecksniff Award for invoking the poor in defense of a tax break for the rich goes to George F. Will: "The restaurant industry is one of the largest employers of minorities and unskilled labor. No one can know the extent of the damage restaurants will receive from restrictions on the deductibility of business spending. . . . Some people are going to get hurt in the learning process and, as usual, the allocation of pain among the social classes will be regressive."

• And this week's Odious Alliance award goes to Robert Beckel, former manager of the Mondale campaign. As reported by Suzanne Garment in *The Wall Street Journal*, Beckel has formed a lobbying firm called "the National Strategies and Marketing Group" and has gone to work for a group of bond dealers bent on preserving tax-free bonds for industrial development. "The Democratic Party has come to learn that we do need a relationship with corporate America," says Beckel unctuously.

□ WE KNEW SHE REMINDED US OF SOMEONE: "When he was almost killed, the look on the one photograph that caught her full in the face en route to the hospital was the look on the face of the Pietà in St. Peter's. . . ."—William Buckley on Nancy Reagan in the June *Vanity Fair*.

□ BOOBS AT NEWSWEEK: A suitable prize will be awarded to the first person offering an even plausible non-prurient explanation of why there is a photograph of two bare-breasted women on page 25 of the June 10 *Newsweek*, in the middle of an article about winners and losers in Reagan's tax-reform plan. The caption reads: "Protest in Oshkosh, Wis.: Averages are deceiving." The fact that Reagan spoke in Oshkosh is mentioned on page 20, in a different article. The women are holding banners protesting a 21-year-old drinking-age law, not the unfair tax system. Go figure.

□ FIFTY YEARS AGO IN THE NEW REPUBLIC: "According to a new Brookings Institution study of the agricultural program, the crop-reduction policy, though immediately successful to at least some degree, is not a safe or satisfactory permanent policy. Wheat farmers have obtained some price benefit from it, though still more from the drought and other factors. Consumers (including other farmers) have paid out more for wheat than the growers have gained. The Brookings report, however, points out that there is an ultimate political and economic danger in this sort of program because, like the tariff, it makes occupational groups special beneficiaries of government policy and leads them to form alliances resulting in all-round subsidies and restriction of output." (The Editors, "The Week," June 26, 1935)

The newest Gandhi speaks his mind.

A Chat With Rajiv

AT 41, Rajiv Gandhi is both the leader of nearly one-seventh of the world's population and a virtual unknown. Before his recent visit to the United States he spoke freely on a wide range of domestic and international issues with freelance writer Maura Moynihan at the Parliament House in New Delhi. Here is some of their conversation:

MM: Some sociologists consider India to be two countries, one that has benefited from industrial growth and progress, and one in which 40 percent of the people live below the poverty line and for whom India's new industrial wealth doesn't seem to trickle down. Is there any way that one can merge industrial growth with revitalization of villages and village cultures? How would you propose doing it?

RG: That is precisely what we have been looking at for the last four months. Education, of course, is the key to the whole thing. . . . Our education system is not good today. It is a mess. We have to improve this while simultaneously changing our industrial and fiscal policies. In the old days industry meant a lot of employment, but now that is so inefficient that, well,

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nobody can afford it any more. We have to reorient our thinking.

MM: And you know the Americans are quite interested in your tax policy and in your economic policies because they have shades of Mr. Reagan's.

RG: We have to really mobilize whatever resources we can for development. A very large part of our economy was underground, and it was not working productively. So, this is an attempt to bring it out, to get it working in the directions that we wanted to go. And more than that it is an attempt to build honesty into the system, because at one time our taxes had gone over 100 percent—107 or 108 percent. This is ridiculous, I mean, you pay more than you earn. For the last five years every year we have been relaxing our taxes, relaxing our various controls and regulations. We are going along this road, but we accelerated it a bit.

MM: Will population control programs also be included in your educational reforms?

RG: That is the critical thing. We are producing an Australia every year!

MM: Are you thinking of introducing any such measures that have succeeded in China and Sri Lanka to control population?

RG: You know, our system is much more open and democratic, so we cannot take some steps that they can take. But we have made progress. We are below two percent [birth rate] now. I think we are 1.92 or something like that.

RAJIV GANDHI BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

MM: In your opinion, where have the dominant ideologies of this century—socialism, Marxism, Leninism, and capitalism—succeeded and where have they failed?

RG: I think they have all succeeded to an extent. But the failure with all of them has been that they are much too doctrinaire. India, fortunately, has never had such a dogmatic ideology. We have taken what we thought was the best from all sides, and have been adjusting it as we move along.

MM: But could you say, for example, that the central political-ideological struggle of the century has been between the Western democracies and the totalitarian nations?

RG: I think your definitions are wrong to start with because everyone talks of democracy, talks of freedom, but it only seems to apply within their own boundaries. The minute they go abroad the rules change and this is what makes us very skeptical about what is said and then what is done. Take South Africa for example. I mean, it is a shame for all humanity to have that sort of subversion at the end of the 20th century and none of the industrialized countries are making any real effort. I think the concentration has shifted from ideology. It was capitalism versus communism at one time. It is now becoming more and more power politics.

MM: On the question of Pakistan developing a nuclear bomb; how do you propose to either counter that or to achieve rapprochement with Pakistan? The Pakistani foreign secretary has said that he is interested in signing an agreement with India for mutual inspection of nuclear facilities.

RG: Well, we have not seen what they actually propose. But I have been in touch with President Zia. We have met twice. I think we could sort something out. We are not at all keen on going nuclear, we don't want to do it. We don't think we can afford it, and we think it is wrong in principle. So, we don't want that to happen. But we think there is a lot the U.S. can do.

MM: How?

RG: Well, in the U.S. you have given Pakistan an exemption from the Symington amendment, which ensures control over countries that are believed to be making nuclear devices, bombs. And Pakistan is the only country that has been exempted from that.

MM: Some Americans claim that India has easily proved its military superiority in the Indo-Pakistan wars and American arms to Pakistan are meant to counter Soviet aggression in Afghanistan.

RG: That is not exactly correct, because the type of weapons that they are giving cannot be used in that mountainous terrain—tanks, certain types of guns, F-16, for example. And the fact is that if the Soviet Union wanted to walk over Pakistan then it could walk over Pakistan. . . .

MM: The Soviets are fighting a war two borders away from you now. How does this affect your relations with the Soviet Union?

RG: We have a good relationship with them, good be-

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cause it is dates back to a very long time. They have helped us out whenever we have been in sticky situations. One of the first problems we have faced was industrialization. We wanted to set up large industries. Nobody helped us. But the Soviet Union came forward and they set up steel plants and other large, heavy industries, which have really been the backbone of our industrialization. Then, during the wars that we had, while many countries shut off their aid—not just military aid but also food aid and other general aid—the Soviet Union didn't. On many world issues we think alike, but if you see our voting pattern in the United Nations then you would see that we don't necessarily vote with them. Our voting pattern is not very different from Pakistan's or China's or Indonesia's except on issues that relate directly to us.

MM: On the issue of Afghanistan; it was noticed in the United States that India was the only democracy and the only one of six countries that voted with the Soviet Union on the Human Rights Commission's condemnation of Soviet violations of human rights in Afghanistan. That was, of course, before your time, but as leader of the Nonaligned Movement, are you committed to restoring Afghanistan's autonomy, independence?

RG: You know, we have said many times that we are against foreign intervention in any country. The Soviets are there because they have been invited in by the Karmal government. I don't see the Karmal government asking them to go back while this sort of pressure is applied through the *mujahadeen* and through Pakistan.

MM: You would you say that the Soviets were "invited" rather than that they "invaded."

RG: Yes. . . .

MM: Could you envision a scenario in which the Soviets invade Pakistan? What would that mean for your relationship with the Soviets?

RG: Now, that is a very difficult question, because I don't know how long they, the Afghans, will put up with this sort of thing on their borders. They have already given some indications that they are getting fed up with these *mujahadeen* camps.

MM: India has been talking with the United States about purchasing some specific military technology to diversify its sources of arms.

RG: Well, you know, there is an impression that we buy everything from the Soviet Union. But we buy from Britain and France, Italy, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland. It is fairly diversified; but the big things, the aircraft and such things, are Soviet—but the Soviet equipment is much cheaper.

MM: So how would you define your relationship with the Soviet Union and with the United States?

RG: Well, like I said earlier, our relationship with the Soviet Union is long-term. I see it getting much better. Our relationship with the U.S. has been very hot and cold.

MM: It is obviously hot.

RG: Yes.

MM: Do you see any improvement?

RG: You know, the surprising thing is that whenever U.S.-India trade has gone up, it has been during a period when we have had the maximum political differences. And when there are less political differences trade has come down. This is over the last ten years. I haven't tried to figure it out yet.

MAURA MOYNIHAN

Maura Moynihan is a New York freelance writer.

Tax reform for the rich.

INSIDE THE SELLOUT

NOW THAT President Reagan has abandoned his brief flirtation with tax reform, it's time for Congress, starting with the House Democrats, to recapture the initiative. Reagan gave a fine television speech as always, telling the big corporations now snubbing their noses at the tax collector that "the free rides are over." But he didn't mean it.

Let's step back a moment from all the technicalities and ask what it is that has people so upset with the current tax system. Most of us believe the tax laws are rigged in favor of big corporations and wealthy individuals. Yes, people also think the tax code too complex, but our main objection to the complexity is that it creates unfair opportunities for manipulation. As the president put it in his speech, the tax code is "complicated, unfair, cluttered with gobbledygook and loopholes designed for those with the power and influence to hire high-priced legal and tax advisers."

Unfortunately, those with the power and influence to hire high-priced legal and tax advisers are exactly the ones who got the ear of the White House in the months between the Treasury Department's original reform plan last November and the president's speech May 28. What's more, a lot of the gobbledygook and the loopholes in the tax code are there because of Ronald Reagan's previous handiwork.

In his first term, Reagan nearly eliminated the corporate income tax with something called the Accelerated Cost Recovery System—a law that allows companies to write off the cost of buying new machines and buildings far faster than they actually wear out. This is the main reason General Electric and so many other hugely profitable companies no longer pay income taxes.

Reagan also gave the wealthy a huge tax cut in 1981—worth about $30,000 or more a year to families earning more than $200,000—by reducing the top individual tax rate from 70 percent to 50 percent and by adding a plethora of new tax-avoidance devices. The top rate on capital gains

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was cut from 28 percent to 20 percent, a step that greatly pleased the average millionaire, who receives more income in the form of capital gains than wages. Ronald Reagan has presided over the biggest tax shelter boom in history. And during his watch federal taxes on the poor more than doubled.

Treasury's November 1984 tax program was in many ways a repudiation of Reagan's earlier policies. But the hopes that were raised by "Treasury I" have now been dashed. Let's take a close look at what it is Reagan is trying to sell to us as populist tax reform.

The single biggest reform provision in Treasury's November program was repeal of Accelerated Cost Recovery in favor of a system requiring businesses to write off their plant and equipment as it actually wears out. This change was expected to raise $213 billion in revenues over five years—about one-quarter of the total "base broadeners" in the original program. The reform was justified not just as a revenue raiser, but also because accelerated depreciation is the single biggest distortion of economic incentives in the tax code.

Reagan's new proposal virtually abandons the attempt to reform depreciation rules. In fact, it would actually increase depreciation write-offs over the long term. In the short run, the new depreciation rules would raise about $39 billion over five years—an 80 percent cut from the original program.

Another major proposal in Treasury I was to end the special break for capital gains, while indexing the measure of gains for inflation. These two changes were expected to roughly cancel each other out in terms of total tax revenue. But they would affect different investors differently. People who held assets for a long time would usually find the inflation indexing a much better deal than the current 60 percent exclusion. Conversely, people who are constantly trading stocks and bonds—generally the wealthiest capital gains recipients—wouldn't get much help from indexing. The authors of Treasury I correctly noted that the capital gains exclusion is a primary force in creating tax shelters and causing harmful economic distortions. Switching to indexing would encourage productive investment and discourage wasteful paper-shuffling.

NOW, HOWEVER, the administration wants to retain a 50 percent exclusion for capital gains, contending that it's needed to stimulate risky investments. Both Reagan and White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan are fond of crediting the recent venture capital boom to the 1978 and 1981 reductions in capital gains taxes. Venture capital has indeed surged since 1978. But there is no evidence to support this *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* reasoning. The key factor was a change in the regulations governing pension funds, which aren't affected by tax incentives since they aren't taxed. Fifty-nine percent of the increase in venture capital funds between 1978 and 1984 came from pension funds and other tax-exempt entities. Another 28 percent came from corporate investors such as banks and life insurance companies, which (a) didn't see their capital gains rate reduced to any significant degree; and (b) don't pay much in taxes anyway. Individual investors, the people affected by the capital gains tax cuts, supplied only 13 percent of the 1978-84 increase in venture capital.

A recent Treasury Department study concluded that the capital gains changes did not provide any significant boost to venture capital. Not surprisingly, the study has been suppressed by the Reagan administration.

IN THE OIL and gas area, Treasury's November 1984 proposal would have raised $39 billion over five years by ending the notorious percentage depletion allowance and another special rule allowing an immediate write-off for the cost of drilling wells. Reagan's latest plan junks these reforms, except for a phased-in limit on percentage depletion in some cases. It would raise only four billion dollars from oil and gas over the same five years. Helping persuade Reagan that "national security" requires keeping the oil loopholes was an absurd coalition of independent oil producers and Jewish tax shelter promoters supposedly concerned about the welfare of Israel.

The abolition of accelerated depreciation, capital gains breaks, and oil loopholes, as Treasury I proposed, would have meant a real crackdown on tax shelters, both personal and corporate. As a backstop, Treasury proposed to treat large limited partnerships as corporations, in order to foil large tax shelter syndications. In the new plan, however, that rule has been dropped, another step that should cheer the oil tax shelter promoters. Real estate tax shelters also would survive, mainly because of the continuation of fast depreciation. Although real estate shelter promoters are wailing about some limited restrictions on their activities in the tax bill, they have told *The Wall Street Journal* that they "think there are going to be a lot of ways to get around" any problems the tax bill might create.

So what's left of tax reform in Reagan's program? Well, a few good features. The investment tax credit would still be repealed, a step that raises $170 billion over five years and is now the biggest reform in the package. Special dodges for defense contractors and other businesses engaged in long-term contracts would be eliminated. Some of the preferences for banks and life insurance companies would be scaled back—although Treasury I's $54 billion in added revenues from financial institutions over five years was cut to only $23 billion in the new package. And significant reforms in the international area—designed to reduce tax subsidies that perversely encourage American companies to move offshore—have been retained. Overall, however, the $767 billion worth of loophole closing in the original package has been cut way back, primarily by a 44 percent scale-back in the corporate reforms.

Looming especially large in the new package is the proposal to end personal deductions for state and local taxes. This is now the second largest revenue-raising item in the plan and the one on which the administration says it is least willing to compromise. Yet deductions for state and local taxes are hardly at the heart of what's wrong with the tax code. Up till now the arguments both for and against

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the deduction for state and local taxes have seemed notably unenlightened. Whichever case you hear last comes close to persuading you that the other side must be right. Officials from high-tax states have complained—often with an excess of hyperbole—that ending the deduction would be a financial catastrophe, that all their rich citizens would move out, and that their states are being singled out for unfair treatment. Reagan administration officials have retorted that they need to repeal the deduction in order to finance the tax rate reductions, and have added that if high-tax states in the Northeast suffer, it serves them right.

CONSIDER, though, that the administration bill would retain the deduction for charitable contributions. The rationale is that money given away to charity shouldn't be considered part of an individual's taxpaying capacity. The individual doesn't get the benefit of spending or saving the money; instead the money accrues to charities, which presumably are providing benefits of a public nature. That's a pretty good argument. But at least people who give money to charity do so because they choose to. State and local taxes by definition go toward serving the public—and taxpayers are *required* to make those payments. It's hard to see why state and local taxes shouldn't be deductible if the write-off for charitable donations makes sense.

Donald Regan has described Reagan's proposed individual rate structure—15 percent, 25 percent, and 35 percent—as having "a nice symmetry." But when Social Security taxes and capital gains preferences are factored in, that symmetry disappears. For families of four earning up to about $40,000, the marginal tax rate, including the 14 percent Social Security tax on wages, comes to 29 percent. From $40,000 to about $80,000 or so, the rate drops to 25 percent (because Social Security taxes no longer apply). At the upper levels, a 35 percent tax rate applies to wages. But the top marginal tax rate on the most common type of income enjoyed by the very wealthy—capital gains—is only 17.5 percent, since half of capital gains would be excluded from tax. So the real rate structure is: 29-25-35-17.5. Not very symmetrical.

So is Reagan right when he claims that almost everyone will win from his program? Well, the plan *is* good for the poor, at least in the short run. The proposed increase in the zero-bracket amount, the personal exemption, and the earned income tax credit will roll back most of the tax increases on the poor that occurred during Reagan's first term. For the rich, however, the plan is even better. By proposing a further dramatic drop in the top tax rate, keeping the capital gains preference, and retaining many of the favorite tax shelters of the well-to-do, Reagan's program would result in another $10,000-a-year average tax cut for those making more than $200,000. In other words, the big winners in Reagan's earlier tax policies are the same big winners in his latest proposals.

For those who fall somewhere between rich and poor, the results are more of a mixed bag. On average, middle-income taxpayers would receive the smallest percentage reductions in their taxes of any income group. Families earning between $20,000 and $50,000 would get average tax cuts of about $160 a year. Those who currently don't itemize deductions or who have large families may do better than that. But those itemizers who pay a lot in state and local taxes may be headed for a tax increase.

Overall, personal taxes are projected to decline by about five percent by 1990. What's supposed to make this possible is a projected 22.5 percent increase in corporate tax collections. That appears to add up: since corporate income taxes are now only one-sixth of total income taxes, every one percent cut in personal taxes must be balanced by a five percent increase in corporate taxes. But because Reagan has restored many of the most important corporate loopholes, much of the administration's new corporate tax revenue would come from temporary gimmicks, such as a recapture of previous accelerated depreciation write-offs.

Ultimately, the Reagan plan is projected to increase corporate taxes by only a token nine percent. Given that effective corporate tax rates were cut in half in Reagan's first term, this isn't much at all. Moreover, it turns Reagan's plan into a big revenue loser in the long run. A nine percent rise in corporate taxes simply can't sustain the seven percent long-term cut in individual taxes the program also calls for.

If the Reagan plan is indeed a revenue loser, then its enactment could exacerbate our already serious deficit problems. And bigger deficits will mean bigger budget cuts, higher interest rates, or higher taxes down the line. Higher taxes could mean that even the modest tax cuts for the middle class, as well as the changes benefiting the poor, could be in danger in the future.

Despite some good points, the Reagan tax program is at bottom not even close to real tax reform. It continues previous policies favoring the rich, fails to redress the imbalance between individuals and corporations, and does not deliver the knockout blow to tax shelters that the country desperately needs to sustain long-term growth. If Congress wants to design a truly fair tax program, it must find the political courage to take on the special interests with which Reagan has chosen to ally himself. The key elements in a real reform package should be serious depreciation reform (as the Treasury proposed last fall), taxation of oil and gas profits and of capital gains just like other income, and less sweeping reductions in the corporate and top individual tax rates. This short list of changes—to which many smaller ones could be added—would raise several hundred billion dollars over the next five years. That's enough to pay for a lot more relief for average taxpayers—whether in the form of lower taxes, reduced deficits, or both—than President Reagan is now offering.

ROBERT S. MCINTYRE

Robert S. McIntyre is director of federal tax policy at Citizens for Tax Justice.

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THE PRESS

POST-MURDOCH POST

"CITY HORROR: MURDOCH SLAYS FAVORITE CHILD." I'll be sorry if that happens, and, one would think, so will Rupert Murdoch. Killing off *The New York Post* would be most painful. It's the best-beloved of all his papers, the one he has labored over most devotedly since he left Australia in 1969. He has his titles, publisher and editor-in-chief, on top of the masthead.

But perhaps I'm being sentimental. Murdoch isn't. He has lost ten million dollars to $15 million a year on the *Post* since he bought it in 1976, and lately it has been losing circulation and advertising as well. A year ago it sold nearly a million; now it's down to 900,000. Despite the drop, it still describes itself as "America's fastest growing newspaper."

Now Murdoch wants to buy Metromedia, a TV chain with stations in New York and Chicago, among other places. The Federal Communications Commission doesn't permit companies to buy TV stations where they already own newspapers, though companies that owned both when the rule came into effect are exempt: that allows *The Chicago Tribune*, which also owns *The New York Daily News*, to keep the TV stations it owns in both cities. So Murdoch must sell the *Post* and *The Chicago Sun-Times*.

The FCC ruling means he can walk away from the ruins of the *Post* without conceding defeat. But it is a defeat, even though the *Post* has been a triumphant personal success for Murdoch, who used it as a springboard to greater things. The *Post* was floundering when he bought it, and despite all his efforts it is still losing money. The sureness of touch that worked with *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Daily Mirror* in Sydney, and with the *Sun* in London, has failed in New York. (The verdict is not yet in on *The Boston Herald*.) He will have trouble finding a buyer for the *Post*. If Rupert Murdoch can't make the *Post* successful, who can? The odds are that it will fold, or be swallowed up by the *Daily News* or by *Newsday*, the ambitious Long Island daily.

I'll miss the *Post*, on the "ask not for whom the bell tolls" principle. It is one of the most dreadful papers in the country. It may even be the worst, now that William Loeb is no longer with us to lend his special touch to the Manchester *Union Leader*. But New York deserves more than two newspapers. It's not just that raucous conservatism should have its voice, or that, somewhere in America, a major paper should be given over wholly to sensationalism, to show how it's done. It's good for all newspapers to have competition, and it's good for the city to have as many competing voices as possible.

Murdoch could always ask the FCC to grant him a waiver, allowing him to keep the *Post*, on the grounds that otherwise it will fold. Murdoch understands the uses of power better than most newspaper tycoons. He has done the Reagan administration many favors and is in a position to do many more—especially if he keeps the *Post* and the *Sun-Times*. Many people believe that if he wanted a waiver, the FCC would bend the rules for him. If he doesn't ask for a waiver, it's because he doesn't want one.

The New York Post is special, a throwback to an earlier age of journalism. Its headlines are often memorable: "HEADLESS BODY IN TOPLESS BAR" and "BABY FREEZES, MOM GRILLED" were classics—though not quite up to the standard of the Sydney *Daily Mirror*'s "LEPER RAPES VIRGIN, GIVES BIRTH TO MONSTER BABY." The apogee of succinct vulgarity was reached by the London *Sun*'s "GOTCHA" when a British submarine sank an antiquated Argentine cruiser during the Falklands war. There was an echo of that famous headline in the *Post* on May 22: "KOCH-YA! MAYOR CATCHES A THIEF." The *Post*'s front-page splash has to be eye-catching, because most of its sales are impulse purchases off the newsstand during the afternoon rush hour. Accuracy is the least of concerns: "GIs BATTLE SOVIET TROOPS ON GRENADA" was riveting but erroneous. "TERROR FROM THE SKY," when an air conditioner fell from a skyscraper, was deceptive. No one was hurt. (It should have been followed by "MILLIONS ESCAPE DEATH," but wasn't.) "FANATIC GUNNED DOWN IN BID TO REACH WHITE HOUSE" concerned a crazy who threatened to blow up the Washington Monument, not the White House.

THOUGH MURDOCH is a highly skilled newspaperman, his ambitions rise well above the inky trade, and he knows how to use his papers to attain them. In 1977, the year after he bought the *Post*, he backed Ed Koch for mayor, and Koch, who ascribed his victory to the *Post*'s support, has been suitably grateful ever since. The *Post*'s partisanship was so flagrant that most of the editorial staff protested. The protest was disregarded—and all the squeamish reporters soon left.

The *Post* hasn't always been so lucky with its endorsements. In January 1982 the paper ran a banner across page one: "ED KOCH FOR GOVERNOR—if you agree, clip coupon on page 3." Thousands did, Koch took the plunge, and the *Post* became, in effect, Koch's campaign daily. It ran countless flattering stories and pictures of him, and a running barrage of snide disparagement of his rival in the primary, Mario Cuomo.

It wasn't enough, and Cuomo won. The *Post* supported Lew Lehrman in the general election, and lost again. But that didn't faze Murdoch. Rousing political battles are good for circulation, and the *Post*'s sales boomed.

The *Post* supported Alfonse D'Amato equally vigorously in the 1980 Senate race against Elizabeth Holtzman (he won), and when Holtzman ran for Brooklyn district attorney in 1981, the *Post* hammered her mercilessly, in a vindictive, dishonest campaign. It even ran the press releases of her rival, Norman Rosen, as news stories. She won all the same.

Worst of all, however, was the *Post*'s treatment of Senator Edward Kennedy's presidential bid in 1980. On December 9, 1979, during the Iran hostage crisis, the *Post* ran

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a headline "TEDDY IS THE TOAST OF TEHERAN—Mob Hails him a Hero after his Shah Attack." The story began: "Sen. Edward Kennedy was hailed in the streets of Teheran today for his condemnation of the Shah of Iran as a 'dictator and thief.' " It was a complete fabrication.

The *Post* played a vigorous part in the 1984 election, supporting Reagan of course, and concentrating its fire on Geraldine Ferraro. It treated her abominably, and reveled in her husband's troubles. It also was first with the discovery that Ferraro's parents were involved with bootlegging during Prohibition—a minor matter that had nothing whatever to do with her qualifications for vice president.

A. M. Rosenthal, executive editor of *The New York Times*, once called Murdoch a "bad element, practicing mean, ugly, violent journalism." That more or less sums up the *Post*, but there's more to it than that. It's also sharp, bright, and has an acute news sense, frequently provided by Murdoch's imports from Sydney or London, where newspaper competition blazes in a manner unknown in the U.S. for several decades. By news sense, I mean the ability to pull out of the mass of information constantly flooding reporters' desks the stories and the angles for those stories that will most surely sell papers. Murdoch's men didn't build the paper's circulation from 550,000 to almost a million with just bingo and a snazzy layout.

Murdoch accuses other papers of condescending to their readers, and boring them. He also claims he must be doing something right, because so many people buy his papers. He has a point.

The paper has many solid, journalistic qualities. Its City Hall reporting is excellent, so is its sports coverage, and its street reporters are fast, competent, and enterprising. Its most conspicuous weaknesses, on the news side, are its Washington bureau, which concentrates on pro-Reagan flackery, and its wholly inadequate coverage of minorities and those parts of New York north of 96th Street or across the East River. If it isn't overtly racist, it makes its sympathies abundantly clear. The *Post* is a vociferous fan of Bernie Goetz.

DESPITE its huge circulation, the *Post* loses money. It is dying for lack of advertising. An advertising man at Bloomingdale's told *The Wall Street Journal* in 1980, "It's immaterial to us if the *Post*'s circulation is 600,000 or 6 million. Our customers are sophisticated and urbane and don't want to hear about the violence and sex the *Post* touts." That's all snobbish nonsense. For a start, the *Post* doesn't tout sex. Violence, yes. Sex, no. The man can never have seen the London papers. The *Sun* (and its rivals) always has bare boobs on page three and stories like "SEXY DOC'S LOVE DRUG FIASCO." The *Sun* sells more copies than all the New York papers put together, but Murdoch has never tried sex as a circulation booster in New York. Furthermore, advertising directors worry what newspaper readers think of the store, not what anyone thinks about the paper. There's a famous apocryphal story that the man from Bloomie's told Murdoch, "Your readers are our shoplifters." It's obviously untrue, but it's told as a New York put-down, and has something to do with the city's irritation that a foreigner could come here and do so well.

A real, fundamental difficulty is that the *Post* is an evening paper. People read the *Times* and the *News* at home, and study the ads. The *News*'s 20 or 40 pages of ads for an Alexander's sale will send tens of thousands of buyers to the department store. People don't read the ads in evening papers, they leave them on the subway or in their offices—so the *Post* is down to six percent of the ad revenue in the city.

Perhaps if Murdoch had made the *Post* into a morning paper at the time of the 1978 strike, he would have beaten the *News*. He nearly won, anyway, when the *News* was almost closed by the Tribune Company in 1982. At the last moment, the Tribune decided to save it, and from then on the *Post* was bound to lose. Murdoch kept it going for the power it brought him.

Where Murdoch used to buy bankrupt newspapers, like the *Post* or *The Boston Herald American* or the London *Times*, for peanuts, now he buys Hollywood studios and television chains for billions. He has the modern Midas touch: the banks will now lend him any amount of money to buy hugely expensive media properties.

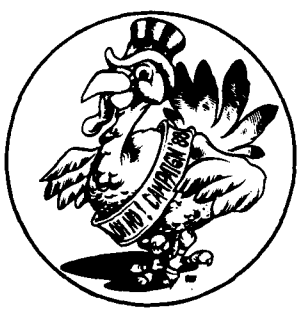
Murdoch is one of the smartest financiers around. He has built an international media empire far bigger than Dow Jones or Gannett, starting from scratch (actually starting from Adelaide—how many Americans know where that is?). Now he is putting together a fourth TV network. If he has to kill off *The New York Post* to do it, ending a history that began with Alexander Hamilton in 1804, he will. Tough.

PATRICK BROGAN

Patrick Brogan is a writer with *The New York Daily News*.

Scratch Iowa and head for Michigan.

CAUCUS KICKOFF



AT LAST, some enterprising Michiganders have a better idea. They're doing everything they can to replace Iowa as the first presidential state in the 1988 elections, at least on the Republican side. If successful, Michigan's move would be rewarded with lavish campaign dollars and extravagant media attention. And it could change the complexion of the '88 race by forcing the

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candidates to confront at the outset a new mix of voters and issues.

If all goes according to plan, here's how it will work: in August 1986, Michigan Republicans will elect up to 10,000 precinct-level delegates, and open the "invisible primary" season for 1988. Invisible primaries are the straw ballots and other nonbinding contests that can make or break candidates long before the real nominating process begins. Michigan's precinct delegates eventually determine which Republican hopeful gets the state's national convention delegates. So next summer's election should produce an early Republican front-runner in the race to succeed Ronald Reagan.

The official nominating season probably won't begin until 1988. When it does, Michigan expects to be first again. Sometime in January 1988 the precinct delegates will meet in county conventions to begin selecting national convention delegates. But according to the state party chairman, Spence Abraham, who is palpably anticipating that first TV network poll, "Next August will really be the kickoff. Whoever wins big there will probably be the winner" of the state's 1988 delegates.

ALL OF THIS may sound absurdly premature, but the candidates are taking it quite seriously. Local Republicans think former governor Pierre du Pont IV of Delaware got a jump on the field by sending a covey of aides to the Republican state convention in January. Du Pont, they believe, was operating on the proven theory that the unknown candidate who hits the first state earliest and most often will surprise the experts every time.

But he'll have to go some way to overtake George Bush, who is vice president today because he followed that same strategy in Iowa in 1979. Bush intends to be strong as horseradish in Michigan, where he beat Ronald Reagan nearly two-to-one in the 1980 primary (though it must be noted that Reagan, on the verge of clinching the nomination, spent his time and money elsewhere that year). And Jack Kemp supporters are counting on Michigan's fast-moving political currents to swing things their way. They point out that moderate Republicans lost control of the governorship several years ago, and that the conservative wing of the state party has surged ever since.

Bush expects to visit Michigan twice and Kemp expects to visit three times in the first half of this year alone. Each also has dispatched top political aides to the state for some early organizing. Back in Washington, Bush aides are quietly citing Michigan as an important first contest for '88.

This isn't the first time that Michigan has attempted to get a head start on the presidential campaign. In 1984 it succeeded in opening the nominating process, staging county conventions more than a month before Iowa's caucus. Hardly anyone noticed, though, since Reagan had no Republican challenger (and Michigan Democrats didn't vote until much later). One who did notice was Terry Branstad, the Republican governor of Iowa. Sensing danger, Branstad mounted a brief crusade at the Republican convention in Dallas to write Iowa's preeminence into the party rule book. The plan died for lack of support.

This time the odds favor Michigan, and the first-in-the-nation duet of Iowa and New Hampshire would become a trio, at least for Republicans: Michigan's conventions, followed by Iowa's caucus and New Hampshire's primary. The official attitude of Iowans now is to downplay the Michigan menace. "The media is used to coming here," sniffed Branstad's press secretary, Sue Neely. "And wherever the media goes, the candidates follow."

That could prove a serious miscalculation, somewhat akin to an earlier Midwestern belief that rain would follow the plow. True, the political press has developed a certain attachment to Iowa and its people, who proudly claim to be the most literate and thoughtful in America. What better place to pick a president than a sincere, straight-shooting, unspoiled heartland state? Thanks to their famous caucus, Iowa politicians have become household words, at least among the several dozen national reporters who run away from home every four years to join the political circus. Why bother to learn a whole new state and a new group of pols, when the ones in Iowa will do just fine?

Lots of reasons. Michigan is far closer to the rest of the country in its demographic mix, its collapsing industrial base, and its changing party makeup. It has large cities and posh suburbs, small towns and slums, big industry and big labor. Iowa has farms, as far as the eye can see.

Michigan Republicans are mounting one of the stiffest challenges to Democratic dominance anyplace outside the South. They've assiduously wooed blue-collar workers with direct mail and radio advertising. And they made a bold pitch for black votes with the recent party switch of a prominent black elected official, Wayne County executive Bill Lucas, a likely Republican gubernatorial candidate next year. Iowa, despite a peculiar habit of picking one-term Democratic senators (could Tom Harkin be the latest?), can't match Michigan's intense two-party competitiveness.

Then there is Michigan's approach to realpolitik. Just last fall, Iowa voters tossed Roger Jepsen out of the Senate after learning he had once visited a bawdy house. Michiganders are less finicky. They reelected Representative Charles Diggs by a landslide some years back, right after his conviction on criminal charges of stealing thousands of taxpayer dollars.

IF IT WERE TRUE that the press really did decide where the race begins, Iowa might be up against an even deadlier drawback—the boredom factor. How much longer can grown men and women be expected to return, election after election, to a state that offers no relief from a relentless diet of steak and pork chops? It's enough to make a plateful of smelts seem appetizing.

Fortunately, the press doesn't decide. The candidates do. When R. W. Apple of *The New York Times* made his now legendary trip to Iowa in 1975 and found Jimmy

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Carter about to emerge—a discovery that "made" both Carter and the Iowa caucus—he was merely reporting on a grass-roots effort that was months in the making. This time around, the candidates and potential candidates seem to be picking Michigan. They are already at work lining up supporters to run for precinct delegate on the 1986 ballot (the qualifying deadline is less than 12 months away).

Meanwhile, Michigan party leaders are engaging in some gamesmanship of their own. They plan to hold off setting a precise date for their '88 conventions, in case some shrewd Iowan tries to pull a fast one. Though the primary calendar is in flux, and Democrats may again start their season in Iowa, the pretenders to the Republican throne are about to begin jousting in Michigan.

So, it's on to Sault Sainte Marie (Kalamazoo and Grosse Pointe, too). See you later, Des Moines, Dubuque, and Mason City. Or, as they say in Detroit these days, sayonara.

PAUL WEST

Paul West is the Washington bureau chief of the *Dallas Times Herald*.

A revisionist view of Israel's 'failure.'

WHO WON LEBANON?

NOW THAT the American ambassador to Israel has said it, it is unanimous. Israel's war in Lebanon was "not only a misadventure, but a tragedy." On the third anniversary of the Lebanon war, and as Israel completes its withdrawal, it is generally agreed that Israel's war in Lebanon, in Samuel Lewis's words, "was a failure, largely because of basic misconceptions from the start and . . . a lot of mistakes along the way. . . ."

There were misconceptions and a lot of mistakes. But was the war, from Israel's point of view, a failure? In terms of the grandiose expectations of Ariel Sharon, yes. But it is curious that the critics who rightly scorned that grandiosity now tacitly accept it as the yardstick by which to measure the war. By any reasonable standard, such as comparing Lebanon and the Middle East today with June 4, 1982, a different verdict suggests itself.

The war in Lebanon had two major objectives. The principal one was to defeat the PLO militarily and cripple it politically. In that the Lebanon campaign succeeded. When the PLO lost its territorial base, it ceased to be a military factor in the region. It was a blow, said Khaled el Hassan, an Arafat aide, "that even superpowers cannot withstand."

The PLO's expulsion to Tunis, and subsequent internal split, has had profound political effect as well. The war cost the PLO its freedom of action, its most valuable political asset. Part of the PLO has been seconded to Syria. The rest, headed by Arafat, has been forced into subservience to Egypt and Jordan. Contrary to what Ambassador Lewis claims, that makes a peace process more possible now than before June 1982.

As long as the PLO—irredentist, committed to terror, and able to inflict real damage on Israel's northern border—was a major, independent actor, the peace process could go nowhere. The Arab countries could not proceed with the PLO and, except for Egypt, would not proceed without it. There was no hope of any progress. There is some hope now. Whatever slight movement Jordan's King Hussein makes toward negotiation with Israel is a function of the PLO's weakness. It is the attenuation of Arafat's veto power, not Arafat's change of heart about Israel's, or Hussein's, right to exist, that gives Hussein some maneuvering room. And Arafat's power is, in turn, dictated by the new facts on the ground. For Arafat, that ground is Tunis.

The other, better hope is that as Arafat's post-Lebanon stature sinks, the possibility rises of non-irredentist Palestinians coming forth with Jordan to negotiate with Israel. Arafat may be a symbol among Palestinians, but Arafat the leader is another matter. Everywhere he has gone he has brought ruin on his people. And when he abandons his people—as he abandoned them first in Jordan, then in Beirut, then in Tripoli—he brings even more ruin. Sentimental attachment to such a leader, as Abu Musa and the other PLO rebels have shown, can only go so far.

To achieve the political and military disarming of the PLO—Israel's primary goal in the war—Israel had to go to Beirut. The belief persists, even among those who think Israel was justified in trying to drive the PLO from its northern frontier, that Israel went too far, literally, in pressing on to Beirut. The historical verdict on this view is in. In the 1978 Litani operation, Israel cleared all of southern Lebanon of the PLO and stopped. The operation was a total waste. As soon as Israel withdrew, the PLO reoccupied the area and resumed attacks on northern Israel. In 1982 Israel did the only logical thing. It pushed to Beirut, expelled the PLO, and destroyed its Lebanon infrastructure. Without Beirut, the overriding objective of the war would have been lost. Isolated attacks may still be launched from Lebanon. But the state-within-a-state is gone. The PLO can no longer make terror a way of life in northern Israel.

THE LEBANON campaign had a secondary objective: to remake Lebanon. (Secondary, because had there been no PLO in Lebanon, Israel hardly would have launched a war to reshape Lebanese politics.) It is said of that goal that it was inevitably doomed to failure.

As Abba Eban likes to say, the only things in history that are inevitable are those that already have happened. Sharon's vision of a Christian-dominated Lebanon was reckless and improbable. But there was nothing inevitable about Bashir Gemayel's assassination. It was not impossi-

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ble for Bashir to forge some working alliance with one or the other of Lebanon's groups, and make it work.

It was not likely, however. And as it turned out, Israel's attempt to install its clients in Beirut failed. But the important point is that while Israel reached for hegemony, as conquerors tend to do, its fundamental interest in Lebanon has always been not hegemony, but de facto nonbelligerency. One of Israel's misconceptions was believing that this required Christian dominance. It didn't. It required only that an outside power do what the Lebanese themselves were no longer able to do, namely, disarm the Palestinians. The Lebanese were not the ones with the claim against Israel.

LEBANON has indeed been remade by Israel's invasion, though not in the way intended. Into the vacuum created by the defeat of the PLO moved not the Phalange, but Amal, the Shiite militia. Just a few weeks ago that was being called the great calamity of the Lebanon war: the creation of a Shiite genie that would terrorize Israel. Israel, it has been said, had acquired a border with Iran.

Tell that to the Palestinians in Sabra and Shatilla and Burj al Brajneh, who have been mercilessly attacked by Amal. Amal wants to prevent the slightest reemergence of the PLO. With terrible irony, and savagery uncommon outside Lebanon, Amal and the Sixth Brigade (Shiite) of the Lebanese army are fighting to keep the PLO out of Beirut and the rest of Lebanon. They have attacked PLO bases near Baalbek in the Bekaa, and in southern Lebanon stormed the Al Buss camp when Amal checkpoints that control entrance to the camp came under small arms fire. Amal leader Nabih Berri has declared that he will not permit the fight against Israel to be waged from the southern Lebanese Shiite heartland. "The era of the Abu is over," says spiritual leader Abdel Amir Qabalan, in a derisive allusion to the Palestinian pretension in noms de guerre. (Abu Ammar, for example, is Arafat's.)

Israel suffered greatly for not seeing two years ago what it can see now. When the Israelis entered Lebanon, they were welcomed by Amal, particularly in the south, where the Shiites had been repressed and dominated by the PLO for 12 years. Israel surely erred in not leaving Lebanon sooner—as soon as Arafat had left and after the possibility of a friendly Christian-led state evaporated. An early withdrawal would have spared Israel much. Not Beirut, but the long occupation was the great tactical error of the Lebanon war. It was a compound error. It not only caused much Shiite animosity toward the Israeli occupiers, but the constant stream of Israeli casualties contributed much to Israeli demoralization. It was not the casualties in the first few weeks, but the pointless occupation that was so demoralizing. The first few weeks had an immediately graspable objective. The long occupation had none. Holding certain strong points has little to do with controlling a place like Lebanon.

The nightmare of occupation is over. Did the invasion produce a nonbelligerent Lebanon? "Amal's resolve to assure Lebanese neutrality in the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation appears to be a matter of settled policy," writes the *Jerusalem Post*, a publication not know for Sharonist tendencies. "There is now a perfectly legitimate confluence of interests between Amal and Israel, resting on a common desire to keep southern Lebanon free from terrorism, whether Palestinian or Shiite in origin." There will likely be a few lunatic kamikaze types ready to die for the Imam Khomeini. But the Shiite militia is of another mind. Its purpose is to secure its new position as the major indigenous force in Lebanon. That interest is defeated by attacking northern Israel and provoking "Iron Fist" retaliation. And Amal has been nothing if not faithful to its own interests. The latest theory of Israel's failure in Lebanon, the Shiite genie, is in some jeopardy. The Shiite genie exists, but its nemeses are its Lebanese rivals, chief among them the PLO.

Besides Amal (and the Druse), the other big winner in Lebanon is Syria, now reestablishing hegemony over the country. Will it use that hegemony to destabilize the Israeli-Lebanese border? It could make Galilee unpeaceful again using Shiite extremists, Abu Musa, or its own agents. But that would pit Syria against Amal, which is tired of other people's wars being fought on its land. More important, it would arouse a stiff Israeli response. Such state-directed terror, in Israeli parlance, has an address. Syria has never relished Israel's mailed response. That is precisely why Syria forbids the use of its Golan Heights border with Israel for guerrilla attacks: not a love of Israel, but a fear of retaliation and possible uncontrollable escalation.

If Syria's intentions toward Israel are not very clear, its intentions toward the PLO are. Amal did act alone against the Palestinians. President Assad, with his legendary cynicism, supported Amal's attack on the Palestinian camps politically, and did what he could to keep it going militarily. He tried to forestall any cease-fire attempt until Amal had gained the upper hand, and demanded that, as a condition for cease-fire, the Palestinians hand over their weapons to the Shiite Sixth Brigade. That happened to be Amal's aim, too. "Syria, in sponsoring this fight," said Edward Said, a member of the Palestine National Council, "is in fact completing the plan for the disarming and the depoliticization of the Palestinians in Lebanon, which was started by Israel in 1982."

That it is now the Shiites and Syria, and not the Christians, who are keeping the PLO from retaking Lebanon is an irony that should not obscure the central fact: *no one* could have done it if Arafat and his forces had not been expelled from Beirut. For Israel, the disarming and depoliticization of the PLO in Lebanon is no small achievement. There is, of course, no denying that the price of the Lebanon war was high: 650 Israelis, thousands of Palestinians and Lebanese dead. Deciding whether the gains were worth the cost is a fearful judgment to make. But pretending that, for Israel, the price was paid for nothing in a lost war is a simple denial of the facts.

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

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The fiery unionist as educational leader.

ALBERT SHANKER, STATESMAN

BY TIMOTHY NOAH

IN HIS futuristic comedy, *Sleeper*, Woody Allen prophesied that civilization as we know it would come to an end when "a man named Albert Shanker got hold of a nuclear warhead." The joke confirmed Shanker's reputation, especially among liberals, as a bit, well, difficult. Shanker had become notorious in 1968 when he led New York City's predominantly Jewish United Federation of Teachers in its struggle for control of the schools in the predominantly black Brooklyn community of Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

Seventeen years later, Shanker is president of both the UFT and its parent, the American Federation of Teachers, and he enjoys a very different public image. He is a recognized leader in the movement to improve the quality of education in the public schools. His AFT, which plays Avis (half a million members) to the National Education Association's Hertz (one and a half million), is by far the less defensively "unionlike" union. Where once the press portrayed Shanker the Obstructionist, today he is Shanker the Statesman. "SHANKER OUT FRONT AGAIN IN PUSH FOR SCHOOL REFORM" read a typical recent headline.

Has Shanker changed? In some respects. He recently announced that he won't run again for UFT president after 1987. When a union president gives up control of his local, he gives up his power base. The UFT, which constitutes more than ten percent of the AFT's total membership, is the largest union local in the country. Shanker's move reflects confidence that he has the reins of his union tight in hand.

But in one crucial respect he has not changed. Throughout his career, he has crusaded to make teaching more of a profession. He believes that teaching requires special academic training and skills, and that teachers should therefore be treated like those in other specialized professions, such as doctors and lawyers. First and foremost, that means higher pay. Public school teachers now average $24,000 a year, a figure higher than the average wage for all workers but lower than that for most professionals. Professionalism also means improving the schools; teachers can hardly claim to be maintaining "professional" standards if the children they teach can't read or write. Finally, it means greater control over what happens in the classroom. As Shanker wrote recently, "*Professional* describes someone who is expert in his or her field and who thus requires little or no supervision and has a high degree of decision-making power." Little or no supervision? Shanker's commitment to professionalism is in many respects laudable, but he has occasionally lost sight of another important value: democratic accountability.

Shanker's conviction that teachers ought to be professionals springs from his Depression-era childhood in working-class Queens. Shanker's mother, a sewing machine operator and a fervent member of Sidney Hillman's Amalgamated Clothing Workers, would speak reverentially of doctors, lawyers, dentists—and teachers. In striving lower-middle-class families like Shanker's, teachers were considered professionals even though their salaries were only slightly higher than those of unskilled workers. Shanker attended Stuyvesant High School, one of New York's specialized public schools for bright students on their way up, and then the University of Illinois in Urbana, where he chaired the Socialist Study Club. He entered a Ph.D. program in philosophy at Columbia, but by 1952 he had run out of "patience and money," and became a "permanent substitute" (that is, temporary) teacher at an elementary school in New York City. He was paid $38 a week.

"Teaching was such a shock," he recalls. Public schools had changed since his childhood. Stern Irish spinsters had been displaced by Jews like him, and the students were now blacks and Hispanics who were less motivated and more unruly than Shanker's peers had been. When Shanker moved up to teaching junior high school math in East Harlem, he found himself phrasing math problems in lurid ways to get his students' attention: "If it takes four ounces of poison to kill a person, how many ounces would it take to kill your mother, your father, your sister, and your brother?"

Monitoring the cafeteria at lunchtime and prowling the school yard during recess, teachers seemed far from the exalted figures that Shanker's mother had imagined. But "professional" pride kept most teachers from becoming union members. Shanker believed that unless teachers unionized, their higher status would remain an illusion. So he joined the Teachers Guild, which was reconstituting itself as the United Federation of Teachers, the AFT local for New York City. Soon Shanker was editing the newspaper and sitting on the executive board. In 1959 he left the classroom for good to become a full-time organizer, and in 1964 he became UFT president.

Four years later, Shanker saw the idea of professional-

Timothy Noah, a former staff writer for TNR, is a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

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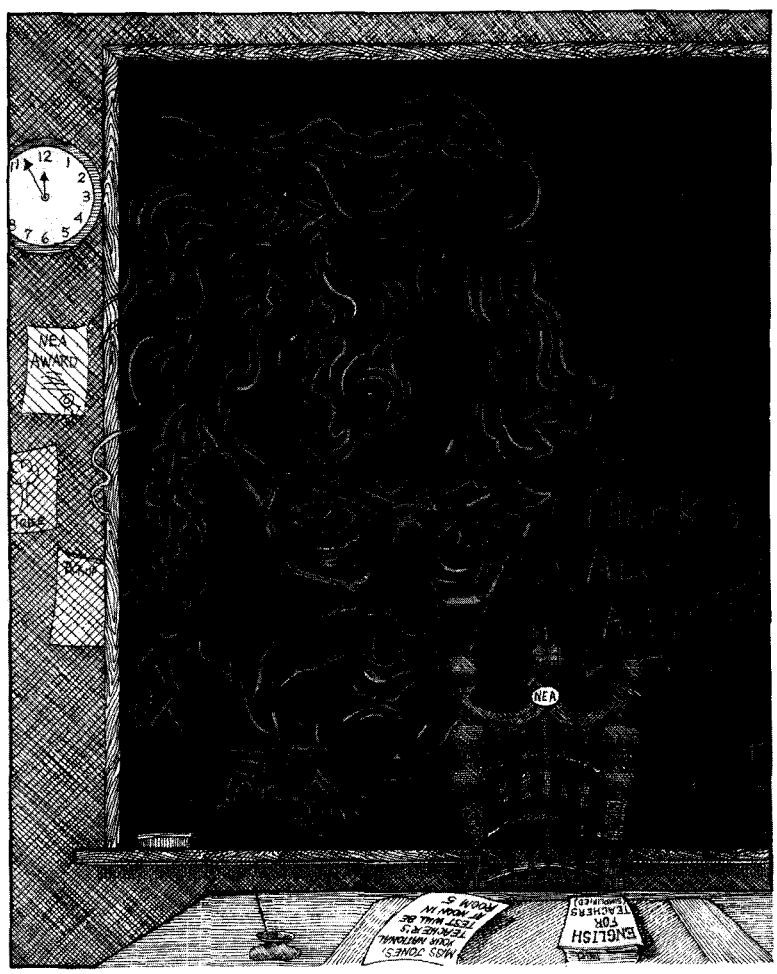
ism put to the test in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville conflict. The dispute arose when an experimental community board controlled by black neighborhood activists with separatist leanings dismissed 19 white teachers and administrators. The board cited a variety of reasons for the dismissal, but few turned out to have much substance. Fundamentally, it was an assertion of power. The board wanted to make room for teachers who would be more sympathetic to its goals, among which were such dubious innovations as the teaching of Swahili. The dismissal was blocked by the city Board of Education, which caused a student boycott, which caused a teacher counterboycott, which led to more firings. The next fall, Shanker called three strikes in succession, in the course of which a number of ugly racial incidents occurred. A militant black teacher read a student's anti-Semitic poem over a local radio station. A pregnant white teacher was hit in the stomach by an angry mob. A principal nominated by the Ocean Hill board turned out to be a black militant under indictment (and subsequently convicted) for conspiring (unsuccessfully) to kill Roy Wilkins of the NAACP and Whitney Young of the Urban League.



ALBERT SHANKER BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Criticism of Shanker's performance at the time focused on his use of harassment as a bargaining issue. Many felt that he publicized the anti-Semitism to keep the cauldron bubbling. (Chants of "Jew pig" and "nigger lover" were heard on the Ocean Hill picket lines.) But what is most striking in hindsight about Ocean Hill is not the hostility between blacks and Jews (which, tragically, has become commonplace), but the questions it raised about who should control the schools. In the fall of 1967, McGeorge Bundy, then president of the Ford Foundation, had released a report advocating in effect more community boards like the experimental one in Ocean Hill. Although the Ocean Hill conflict hadn't occurred yet, and the UFT still basically supported the experiment, the union sharply criticized Bundy's report for ignoring "the new power and integrity of the professional teachers who will not continue to teach in any school or district where professional decisions are made by laymen." With the painful battles over Ocean Hill, it seems likely that Shanker's wariness of "laymen" hardened.

In 1969, New York City did establish a broad decentralization plan that created local community boards to oversee the schools, but Shanker's UFT ended up with substantial control over the process: voter turnout in the local elections for board members was usually small, and UFT-endorsed candidates usually won. In any event, Shanker was moving into the national arena. When AFT president David Selden expressed reluctance to join the AFL-CIO executive council because of differences with George Meany over the Vietnam War (Meany supported it), Shanker joined instead. He quickly ingratiated himself with Meany, with whom he shared a cold-war outlook. Some news reports even speculated that Shanker might succeed Meany.

Instead, he succeeded Selden as AFT president in 1974. This meant Shanker was able to set an agenda for improving the state of education in America. In a weekly column run as a paid advertisement in *The New York Times* (at a yearly cost to his union of $100,000), Shanker explained why schools were in decline. Teachers were not being trained adequately in their own subjects; Shanker urged that state requirements for subject training be beefed up. Unruly students were permitted to disrupt classrooms; Shanker said they should be separated from the others so that their classmates could learn and teachers could teach. Certain forms of bilingual education isolated Spanish-speaking students from the culture in which they would have to survive; Shanker proposed that they be abolished. Too few qualified college graduates were going into teaching, and tuition costs were soaring; Shanker proposed that the federal government pay college costs for students willing to spend five years as teachers.

These ideas weren't particularly radical, but most bucked the permissive trend among educators. In particu-

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lar, they sharpened the distinction between the AFT and the NEA. Although the NEA had started out as the stodgier, more "professional" organization, the AFT's success in collective bargaining during the 1960s had persuaded the NEA to transform itself into a union. Now it was the AFT that was acting more like a professional association (in the best sense) by proposing educational reforms, and the NEA that was intent upon protecting its constituency from criticism or scrutiny. Today the only reminder that the NEA once disdained unionism is its continuing refusal to join the AFL-CIO.

Shanker's proposals, however, proved to be so popular that the NEA eventually found itself playing catch-up. A good recent example was Shanker's proposal to establish a mandatory national teachers' exam that would rigorously test knowledge of the subjects teachers will teach. The test would replace state exams, described by Shanker as "minimum competency tests that would be a joke in any other profession." (In Florida an elementary school math teacher need only pass sixth-grade math.) Mary Futrell, president of the NEA, reacted to Shanker's proposal by announcing that any national standardized test was a violation of "the basic right of the states to determine who is qualified to teach." The press presented the story as the latest proof that Shanker's union was committed to improving education while Futrell's was committed to protecting its members. The result: Futrell sheepishly promised to get the NEA "to make a clearer statement, and a more positive one," in favor of testing incoming teachers.

Much of Shanker's advantage lies in the strong position he enjoys in his union, which enables him to strike out on his own without consulting too many others. The NEA, by comparison, divides authority between the president and the executive director, and must put new proposals before an annual convention of 6,000 to 7,000 members—a gathering that is often described by NEA members as the largest deliberative body in the world, and acts like it. (In 1983 it introduced a Slavic Caucus; last year, it adopted a resolution in favor of equality for left-handed students.) One senses the difference between the two groups immediately upon entering their respective offices in Washington: in the AFT's sleek postmodern high rise on Capitol Hill, staffers are visibly enthusiastic; in the NEA's aqua beehive on 16th Street, there's an aura of defeatism. ("It looks more like a school than the AFT's offices," an NEA public affairs officer wanly explained to me as we walked through the drab corridors.) One NEA official told David Savage of *The Los Angeles Times*, "Shanker is the most visible and articulate spokesman for teachers in this country. So naturally we hate him."

SHANKER'S single-minded pursuit of professionalism has certainly helped galvanize the movement for educational reform. But it has its shortcomings. Inevitably the idea that teachers should be professionals places a premium on job stability. If doctors aren't routinely thrown into the street after 20 years of practice, why should teachers be?

Shanker insists that you can't get good people to become teachers if you can't promise them security. Partly for this reason, he opposes competency tests for teachers who are already teaching. Shanker concedes that a number of incompetent teachers have managed to slip into the profession, and "I really don't want to take a hard-line position that the kids have to live with it forever." He even agrees that it would be "good public policy to require recertification in many fields." But "if we single out only one of those fields, I think that we are sending a message." In other words, when the doctors and lawyers give in, we'll give in.

Recertifying doctors and lawyers isn't a bad idea, but for now the evidence suggests that incompetence is more widespread among teachers than it is among other professionals. Prospective education majors consistently perform worse on the SAT than all but a handful of other groups; last year they ranked 74 points below the national average. At least an incompetent doctor can be counted on to know more about anatomy than the man in the street.

Shanker's second line of defense against retesting teachers is that there's a teacher shortage on the way: who will replace the teachers who flunk? The evidence for this shortage is questionable. It amounts to speculation that the baby boomers are unleashing hordes of babies of their own. But the birthrate has yet to match the 1961 baby-boom peak of 4.3 million, and there's no guarantee it ever will. If it does, it will be at least partly offset by the fact that there were few teacher layoffs over the last, post-boom decade. According to an NEA report, a 13 percent dip in student population was accompanied by a one percent dip in the number of teachers.

If, nevertheless, a teacher shortage does materialize, state legislatures could be galvanized into eliminating teacher certification requirements. These teaching credits are an important reason good people won't go into the profession. (They are at least as much an impediment as the low pay Shanker deplores.) Teacher certification currently has the effect of weeding out smart and idealistic college graduates who might choose to teach for a year or two before heading into more lucrative professions. Today they generally end up wasting their idealism on the children of the rich by teaching in private schools, where certification is not required. Shanker defends certification, arguing that it's easier for an inexperienced teacher to control a classroom of privileged children than it is to preside over a chaotic group of public schoolchildren from all classes and races. But his defense seems perfunctory. After all, he didn't have to get his teaching credit before teaching in New York schools, and he speculates that his fellow "permanent substitutes" would rank in the top 25 percent of teachers today.

Ultimately it will take laymen to advocate certain reforms that Shanker, as a union leader, either can't or won't propose. Every profession strives to free itself from the scrutiny of nosy amateurs, but such demands should be treated warily. Especially when it comes to educating children in the public schools. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Royalty, Feigned and Fumbled

Pirandello's importance seems to me of an intellectual and moral nature, i.e., a cultural rather than an artistic one: he sought to introduce into popular culture the "dialectic" of modern philosophy, in contrast to the Aristotelian-Catholic mode of conceiving "the objectivity of reality."

Thus Antonio Gramsci, who was a theater critic for four years in his late 20s. (Later, in his *Letters from Prison*, he said that he had written enough about Pirandello in those years to make a book.) I venture to agree with Gramsci on the locus of Pirandello's importance, most clearly in *Henry IV*. Many commentators compare that play with *Hamlet*, a comparison that, for me, only underscores Gramsci's view. The lasting worth of *Henry IV* is not in its intrinsic artistic vitality but in its exploration of reality. No such choice is possible with *Hamlet*.

Henry IV
(Orion Classics)

Perfect
(Columbia)

An Italian film of *Henry IV* brings the subject up. It stars Marcello Mastroianni and was directed by Marco Bellocchio, who made the adaptation with Tonino Guerra, celebrated for his work with Antonioni. The names bristle with promise, but it is not kept. And after all the film's faults are noted, the central broken promise is Pirandello's.

To remind you: the time is today, in a castle. Twenty years earlier, a wealthy man (never named) was dressed for a carnival as Henry IV, the Holy Roman Emperor, when he fell from his horse and hit his head. Apparently this man then became deluded that he *was* Henry IV and, with the support of his family, has been living in 11th-century dress, attended by appropriately dressed servants. The present action of the play includes the woman he once loved in vain, her 19-year-old daughter, who is her youthful image, the woman's lover who may have pricked Henry's horse on that fateful day, and a psychiatrist who visits Henry with them. The doctor's intent is to stage a shock that may bring Henry to his senses, but the result is that Henry—who has not always been as deluded as he seemed and who has partly taken refuge in his "affliction"—stabs the lover in a frenzy, and is now sealed into his delusion.

The oddity of the film is that it does something of what I think the play needs, and still it doesn't succeed. In my minority view, the last act of the play is the only material of genuine interest. A two-minute choric prologue could easily replace the previous two acts of tortuous exposition and padding. The screenplay, made for Italian TV, though it doesn't follow this prescription, greatly condenses the acts leading to the climax; yet the work isn't saved. It remains a demonstration of views of reality, not a gripping drama.

Mastroianni struggles with the role of Henry—rather, he keeps struggling to struggle. Throughout the film he seems to be reaching for substance to engage him and test him, substance that he can probe and crack open. All he seems able to find is a series of attitudes, admittedly somewhat more interesting than in several lesser films of his where he has been tempted to loaf. He isn't loafing here, but neither does his performance create the ark of mysteries that he and Pirandello wanted.

Bellocchio began his career smashingly with such strong films as *Fist in His Pocket*, *China Is Near*, and *In the Name of the Father*. Lately he has lapsed into ambiguous vacuities like *Leap into the Void* and *The Eyes, The Mouth*. Pirandello hasn't helped him. The film adaptation puts in a couple of subtle touches to help the play-acting theme: when Henry falls from his horse (in flashback), he doesn't really strike his head hard; after he stabs his old rival and the wounded man is taken out, we see that Henry has used a trick, collapsible sword. But Bellocchio doesn't significantly use this "performance": his direction fragments into unwieldy bits. Any overview he may have of the work is never realized.

More Pirandello may be coming our way. While I was in Cortona last August, a company was in the vicinity shooting a film based on his novel *The Late Mattia Pascal*, starring Mastroianni. Despite the disappointment above, I hope the new one arrives.

Once in a while I get a nostalgic twinge for the old Hollywood studio universe. It's a bit like longing for a return to the Middle Ages, to a life that, though straitjacketed, is orderly and protective. John Travolta's new film makes me wish that he had been born 30 years earlier: he would have become a tremendous star, the kind we now sigh about in their antiquity. Travolta has everything that a star needs: looks, sex appeal, quite adequate acting ability. He has two currently unique qualities: the ability to move like a dancer even when he isn't dancing (as Astaire did) and unforced sweetness. In the high Hollywood days, he would have been nurtured and groomed and presented in carefully manufactured pictures to win him millions of fans worldwide.

But what happens to him in the post-studio film world? Dubiously blessed

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Almost You. New York Yuppies nearing the end of youth. A keen, deftly handled comic stiletto. (Reviewed 6/3/85)

Mikey and Nicky. Written and directed by Elaine May, stars John Cassavetes and Peter Falk. Set in crime world. Strong, relentless drama of male bonding, ethics, sexuality. (1/1&8/77)

What Have I Done to Deserve This? Coolly amoral black comedy about Madrid today. Not quite amoral enough, but pretty fierce. (5/20/85)

Where's Picone? Giancarlo Giannini, as the essence of Naples, grifts his way in and out of a string of tight situations. Loose but savory. (5/27/85)

SK

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with freedom of choice—dubious for him, anyway—he is the key element in separate packages sold to various independent producers, without the supervising care of a studio chief. Those chiefs were not precisely flawless, but the best of them knew how to create stars. Travolta is at the mercy of his own judgment and that of his agents and personal managers, who, on the evidence, don't have the means and skill to construct a career for him. As a result, eight years after *Saturday Night Fever* he is still groping and hoping.

His latest is called *Perfect*, a title too vulnerable to be kidded. The script is based on a series of articles in *Rolling Stone* by Aaron Latham; Travolta plays a *Rolling Stone* reporter named Adam Lawrence. (Possibly you've noticed that the initials of the original author and of the protagonist are identical?) Travolta works simultaneously on two stories for the magazine. He gets an interview with an indicted business biggie. (No reason is given as to why the biggie grants the interview, speaks frankly, then relies on Travolta not to turn the tapes over to the government.) And he is working on an article about health clubs as the singles bars of the 1980s. The first story shows the reporter's seriousness; the second, which takes up a great deal more screen time, shows that he is hip. Also, it gives lots of chances for aerobics classes with dozens of pelvises thrusting to loud rock music. My favorite scene in this expensively produced yet cheap film is one in which Travolta joins such a class. Rows of young men and women in leotards, reflected in huge mirrors, engage passionately in solo intercourse while Travolta, exercising along with them, watches with an innocent bemused look, as if trying to figure out why they enjoy it.

The aerobics instructor is Jamie Lee Curtis, the most metallic screen woman since Jill Clayburgh. The instructor has been wounded once by the press and won't talk to Travolta. He gets her confidence; loses it; gets it again; loses it again; and finally wins her by his behavior at the businessman's trial. The old ideals-vs.-sellout theme is simplistic enough; here it is crudely travestied—with dialogue of ostentatious vulgarity.

And in the midst of this mess, furiously trying to make it all go, is the engaging, misguided non-star star, suffering once more from a bad choice. Irving Thalberg, Adolph Zukor, Darryl Zanuck—Harry Cohn, even—where are you now that Travolta needs you?

The pipe-smoking man and his heavenly music.

THE BODY OF BACH

BY EDWARD ROTHSTEIN

THERE would seem to be very little mysterious about Bach. He has reached his 300th birthday with a reputation unmatched in the musical pantheon. He is neither neglected nor overrated; no revisions of the repertory are taking place; no discoveries are changing our understanding of his achievement. There is, simply, the music itself, extravagant in its range and invention: the *Goldberg Variations*, the *St. Matthew Passion*, the *B minor Mass*, the cantatas, the *Well-tempered Clavier*, the cello suites, the violin sonatas, assorted toccatas and suites and fugues and partitas.

The man behind the music also would seem to offer few secrets—no hints of syphilis as with his Romantic successors, no passionate letters like Beethoven's to his "Immortal Beloved," no arcane musical programs with autobiographical clues buried in scores as with Berlioz or Elgar or Berg. Bach simply looked at himself as a craftsman. "I was obliged to work hard," he said; "whoever is equally industrious will succeed just as well." We know him through that industry—a cantata written every week for two years, a set of collected works that took more than 50 years to edit. He was part of a dynasty of musicians who were so influential that in Eisenach the family name became generic; town musicians were called "die Baache." And Johann Sebastian embodied in his career the variety of that dynasty's social roles. He was a virtuoso organist, a court composer, a church composer, a teacher, a producer of secular concerts. The facts about his life are known through those roles, in public documents, city records, petitions, announcements, resignations. The private man is seemingly irrelevant: he worked hard, married twice, and in domestic harmony fathered 20 children.

But there is something missing in this apparently clear portrait. We are used to enshrining composers as gods in a temple of art, divorcing earthly facts from our understanding of the music. But in no other composer is the disparity between the man and his work so immense. Bach's life is considered stupefyingly ordinary, but his music is divine, dealing in essence rather than in accident, in being rather than in appearance. Indeed, who can listen to the *D sharp minor Fugue* in Book I of the *Well-tempered Clavier* and not feel, in the ways in which a single theme is contemplated, combined with itself, inverted, expanded, contracted, and dissected, that this work has transcendent concerns? Even the turns of the melodic theme, which hint at something vulnerable, even melancholy, ultimately become aspects of architecture rather than of sentiment. Albert Schweitzer, who wrote one of the more profound studies of the composer, put it this way: "The artistic personality exists independently of the human, the latter remaining in the background as if it were something almost accidental. Bach's works would have been the same even if his existence had run quite another course." As a man, he remains mundane; his music, meanwhile, dwells in the eternal.

It is remarkable how consistent this view of Bach has been. Even during the years of Bach's supposed eclipse just after his death, when his works

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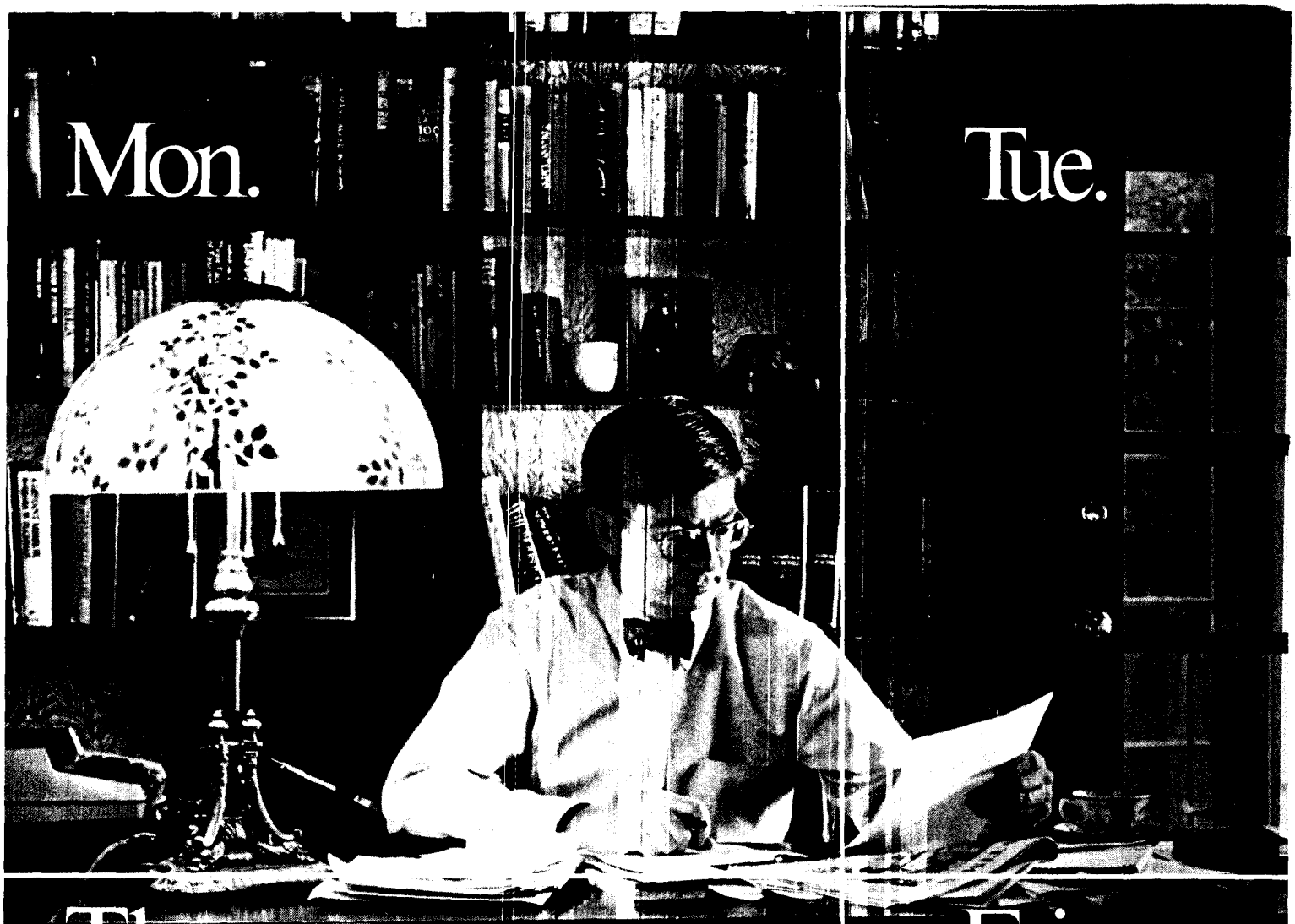

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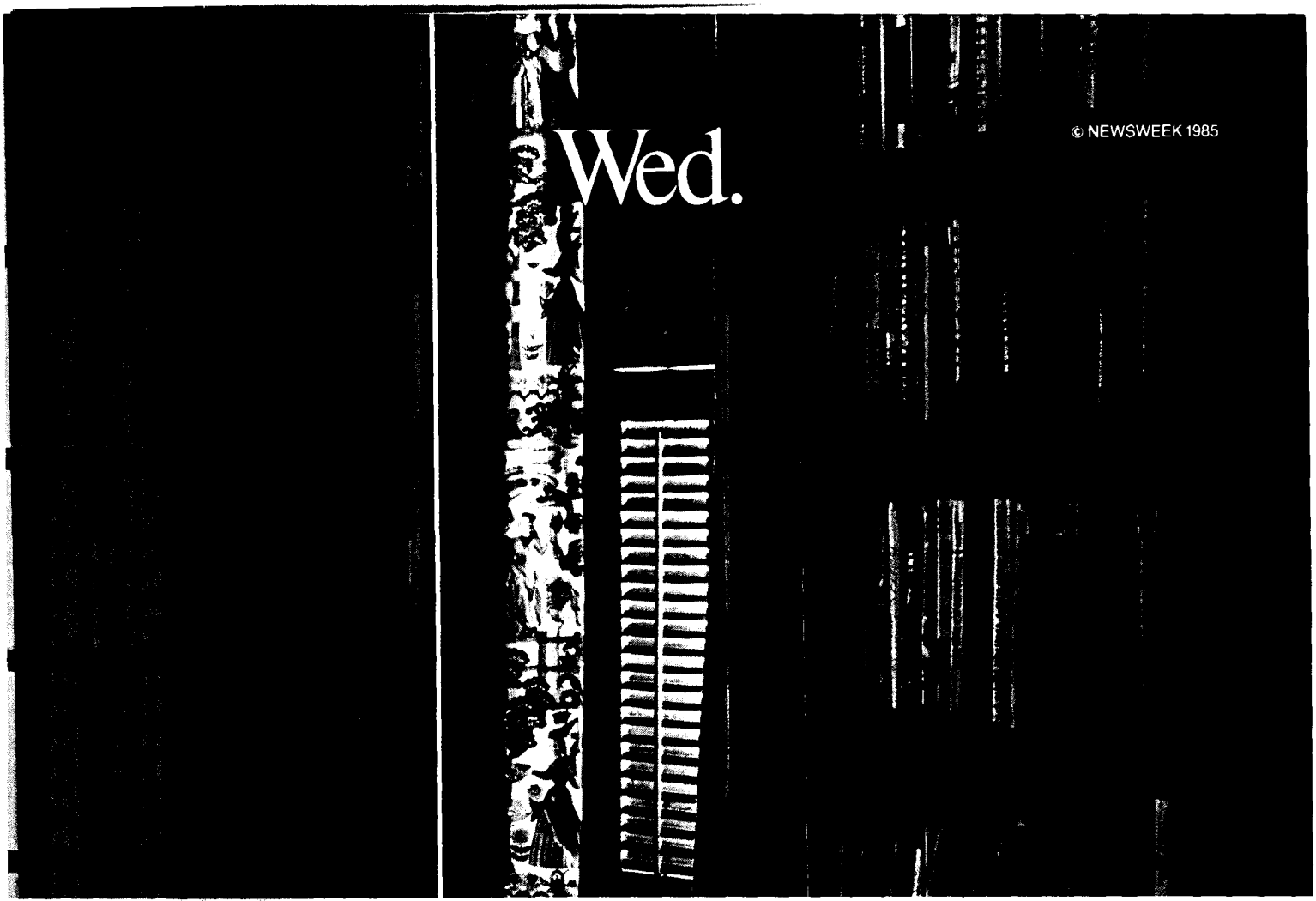

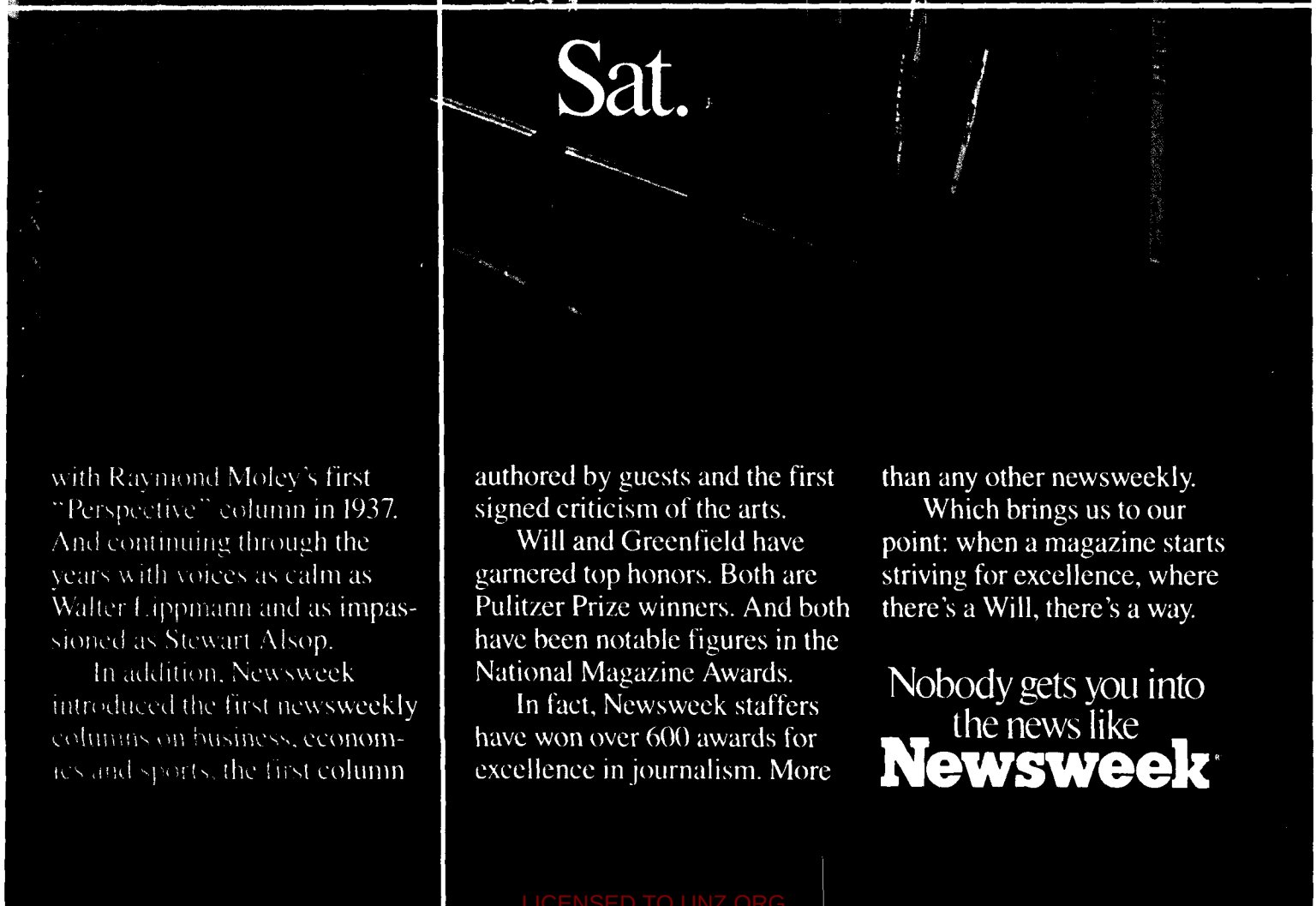

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were not performed and were compared unfavorably with Handel's, he still had a profound impact on music's greatest practitioners—on Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and even Chopin. Bach's son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, made money by renting unpublished scores of his father's works; his wife continued the tradition, and so did Bach's granddaughter.

And, soon enough, devotion to Bach as transcendent artist entered the heart of German musical and intellectual life. On hearing the *Well-tempered Clavier* for the first time on June 21, 1827, Goethe felt, he wrote, "as if the eternal harmony were communing with itself, as might have happened in God's bosom shortly before the creation of the world. It was thus that my inner depths were stirred, and I seemed neither to possess nor to need ears, still less eyes, or any other sense." Wagner presented Bach as a musical savior of the German people itself:

> If we would comprehend the wonderful originality, strength, and significance of the German mind in one incomparably eloquent image, we must look keenly and discerningly at the appearance, otherwise almost inexplicably mysterious, of the musical marvel Sebastian Bach. . . . Look at this head, hidden in its absurd French full-bottomed wig, look at this master, a miserable cantor and organist in little Thuringian towns whose names we hardly know now, wearing himself out in poor situations, always so little considered that it needed a whole century after his death to rescue his works from oblivion; even in his music taking up with an art-form which externally was the complete likeness of his epoch, dry, stiff, pedantic, like perruques and pigtails in notes; and see now the world the incomprehensibly great Sebastian built up out of these elements!

The amazement and worship endure even in the most scholarly musicological circles of this century. Bach has always been at the center of the "authenticity" movement, which attempts to reconstruct the instruments, ensembles, and performance practice of Bach's time. Arguments over "authentic performance" can resemble disputations over holy texts; they have split the musical community along more than scholarly lines. "You play Bach your way," the harpsichordist Wanda Landowska commented to a colleague, "I will play him his way."

Behind these invocations of the sacred there was, however, a man whose life and character must have been bound up in his music. Even the physical traces of Bach are suggestive. His skeleton was found in 1894 in an oak coffin, with its skull bearing—in Schweitzer's words—a "prominent lower jaw, high forehead, deep-set eye-sockets, and marked nasal angle." He continues: "Among the interesting peculiarities of Bach's skull may be mentioned the extraordinary toughness of the bone of the temple that encloses the inner organ of hearing, and the quite remarkable largeness of the fenestra rotunda." The skull bears some resemblance to the only two portraits of Bach that have been authenticated. Both were probably painted by Elias Gottlieb Haussmann, the later (1748) a copy of the earlier (1746). A few years before his death the composer is shown holding, angled against his stomach, the score of a puzzle canon: the canon challenges the player to figure out how and when and where a version of the theme is to be played against itself. Bach's right hand is fleshy, feminine, delicately proffering the sheet of paper, while the rest of his body takes no cognizance of his presented art. He stares directly out at the viewer, bewigged in perruques and pigtails, his face as well fed as his belly, the mouth in a pose of slight tension, neither a smile nor a sneer, possessing some degree of self-satisfaction. His left eyebrow is raised, as if in inquiry, his right brow slightly lowered. It is not quite what we expect of the composer either of the canon or the great *Passions*. The body is so solidly there, the eyes so surely presenting a claim, their glance so skeptical—and so ambiguous—that the gentility of the musical offering seems posed, unconvincing, artificial.

WAS THAT the pose in which he made his true "Musical Offering" to King Frederick II, based on a theme that the king composed? With a slight irony, and more than a slight ego? When Bach visited Potsdam, the king had presented him with a theme on which to improvise. Most immodestly, Bach improvised extravagantly, and just two months later had engraved two fugues, ten canons, and a trio sonata based upon the king's theme. This is surely the gesture of a man at once making an effusive offering while raising his eyebrow in pride over his invention and his powers. As in the portrait, this is not a man out of touch with his surroundings. Bach is very much in control, choosing to write his puzzle canons, knowing full well how they will be received, and how anomalous such taut structures are in a world beginning to love sentimental novels.

THERE IS also something in the composer's thick neck and corpulent chest covered in white silk and a gold-buttoned coat that suggests a physical body that can be sensed even in Bach's most abstract music—in its dance rhythms, surprising accents, and swirl of figuration. Bach was, in fact, hot-tempered and stubborn. He was censured for getting into a sword fight after calling one of his players a "nanny-goat bassoonist." His taste for wine is evident in the substantial sums that appear on many of his accounts. But in Haussmann's portrait there is also that feminine hand, so split apart in manner from the physically commanding pose of the man. Indeed, in dealing with those in authority, those who controlled the means of patronage, Bach presented that most fleshy delicate hand, the pinky lightly floating in deference. Bach *served* all his life. Servile epistolary salutations were, for example, conventions of the time, but Bach never missed an opportunity to exploit the style when approaching patrons. There is this remarkable opening to an argumentative missive:

> Their Magnificences, the Most Noble, Most Reverend, Most Distinguished, Respected and Most Learned Members of the Most Worshipful Royal and Electoral Saxon Consistory at Leipzig, My Most Honored Masters and High and Mighty Patron. YOUR MAGNIFICENCES, MOST NOBLE, MOST REVEREND, MOST DISTINGUISHED, RESPECTED AND MOST LEARNED, MOST HIGHLY ESTEEMED MASTERS AND HIGH PATRONI!

But after that very salutation comes the stern and skeptical glance, a demand, an appeal, a complaint—a man discontent with his place and his role.

The letter following that fawning address was, in fact, to Bach's masters at Leipzig, the city where Bach spent most of his mature musical life, from 1723 to 1750. There he produced his great sacred works, including five complete cycles of cantatas, the *Mass* and *Passions*, and the great fugues and canons of his late years. It was the place, in other words, where the transcendental Bach took shape, after he had written most of his organ and keyboard masterpieces. As Kantor of the Thomaskirche and Director Musices, he

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was the most important musician in Leipzig, responsible for the music in the four principal churches, and for the town's musical life. These were the years of musical grandeur, in which Bach, one would assume, had the religious and public support of Leipzig behind him.

STILL, as any number of his letters to the Leipzig Council indicate, the situation was in fact far different. Before going to Leipzig, Bach was remarkably content at Köthen, where he was a court composer to a prince who loved music. Then the prince married a rather unmusical woman. Sensing the change in his status, Bach made inquiries in other towns. Kuhnau, who held the position at Leipzig, had died. Telemann, then the most renowned musician in Germany, was first offered the position; next in line was Christoph Graupner, who was something of an alumnus. Only when they both declined was Bach considered. To the councillors Bach was a mediocrity and, conversely, the position was a compromise for Bach. From his place at the center of court life with a sensitive prince, he moved to Leipzig, where he had to answer to several dozen civic and church superiors, who included the 15 members of the city council who hired him, the ecclesiastical authority of the consistory, which supervised the church services, and the rector of the school itself, within which Bach had to teach Latin along with music. Bach was paid less than a quarter of what he had received at Köthen, living expenses were higher, and he was dependent upon "freelance" playing at funerals and weddings. (Bach later complained that a "healthy wind was blowing" one year in Leipzig so he made almost nothing from funerals.)

Bach's new position also demanded rising at four or five in the morning to maintain discipline in the school until the students retired at eight in the evening. He was expected to write and prepare music for all the church services; he composed a cantata every week for the first two years. Moreover, as soon as he arrived in Leipzig, Bach was embroiled in a dispute over whether he would have charge of the music at St. Paul's, the university church. Bach needed the income and pressed his case. In 1725 he went over his superiors' heads and wrote three petitions to the Elector of Saxony, pleading a tightly

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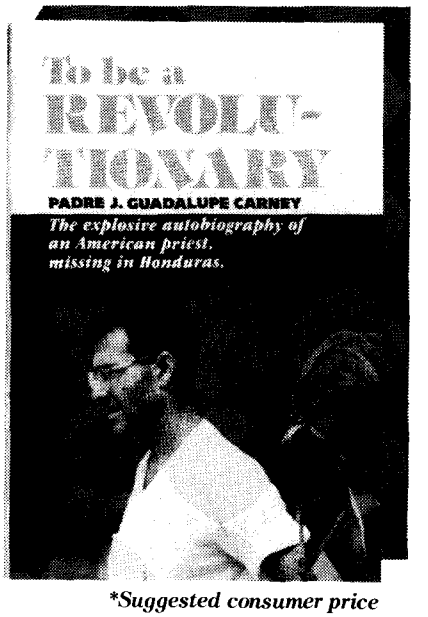

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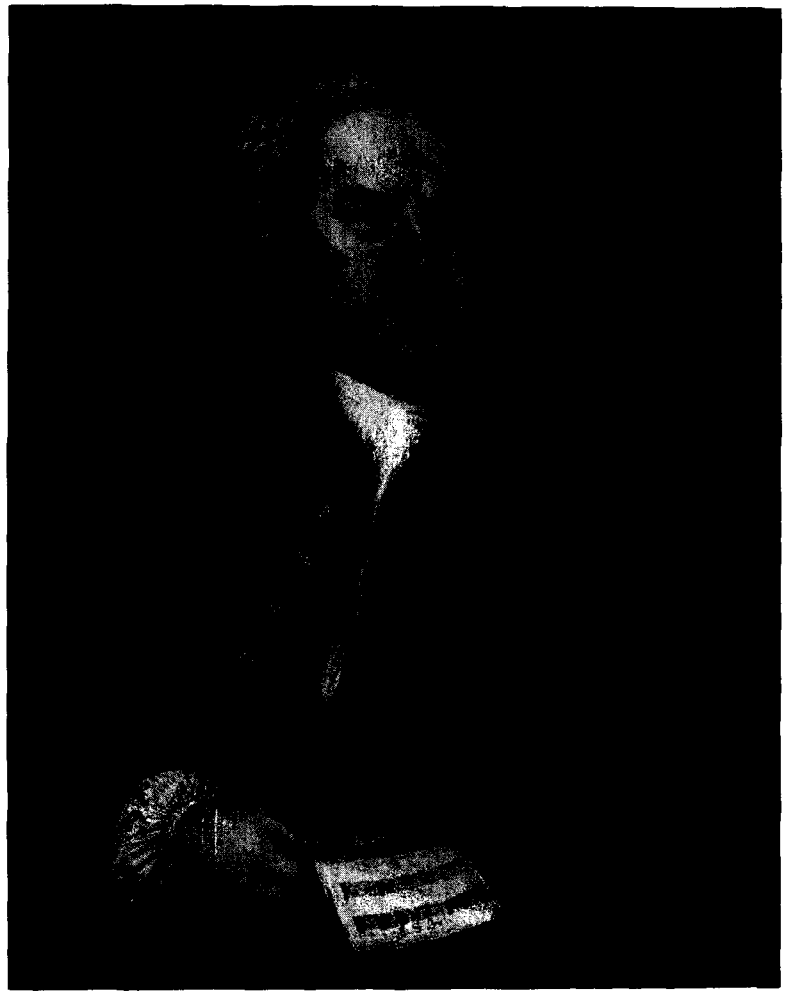
argued case. This did not make for good relations with the council; Bach lost his appeal, and the composer found commissions passing him by, leading to other conflicts. In 1729, just after his first performance of the *St. Matthew Passion*, the council ignored both Bach's selections of new pupils and his musical priorities. At a council meeting, according to the minutes, Bach was called "incorrigible." The council decided "he must be reproached and admonished."

Eschewing his usual salutation, Bach sent a memo to the council, biting in its graciousness and titled: "Short but most necessary draft for a well-appointed church music; with certain modest reflections on the decline of the same." The climactic conflict, lasting more than two years, came in 1734, when Johann August Ernesti was appointed rector of the school. One historical account, dating from 1776, describes how the men became bitter enemies: "Bach began to hate those students who devoted themselves completely to the *humaniora* and treated music as a secondary matter, and Ernesti became a foe of music. When he came upon a student practicing on an instrument he would exclaim, 'What? You want to be a beer-fiddler too?' " Finding deaf ears at the council with more than four lengthy complaints and responses, Bach again appealed over their heads, "To His Most Serene Highness, the Mighty Prince and Lord, Frederick Augustus, King in Poland," etc., etc.



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH BY ELIAS GOTTLIEB HAUSSMANN

These confrontations, which occurred earlier in Bach's career as well, show a keen sense of political hierarchy in Bach's language, along with a peremptory dismissal of political manners in his actions. When it came to musical matters, there was no compromise. Yet Bach came to Leipzig at a moment when music was becoming less and less important in schools and the community, ironically, because of the dawn of the Enlightenment, which Ernesti represented. Bach's role was peculiar; he was even dependent at the end of his life on contributions from the community, because he essentially had no social position. When he died, one member of the council cautioned against replacing him with anyone resembling a "Kapellmeister." His successor gave his first performance in a concert hall, not a church.

Christoph Wolff, the distinguished Bach scholar, points out that Bach understood these matters quite well. In the cantata of homage to the municipal council (BWV 216a), Mercury, the god of commerce, declares his gift to the council: "My trade, which here / I firmly plant, / shall provide you with / the greatest part of your lustre." That trade, and the world of the bourgeoisie that developed in its wake, did indeed leave the Kantor and Director Musices looking somewhat quaint. Haussmann's portrait captures the paradox, in Bach's face and body and hand, the gracious offer of music, and the ironic awareness that the music was posing more than a trivial puzzle to its listeners.

The biggest puzzle is that this most contentious man working at this peculiar historical moment produced such works as the *St. Matthew Passion* and the *B minor Mass*—music that seems to speak without ambiguities about faith and belief, in a tone of voice and with a technical assurance that make the music seem not just pre-modern, but otherworldly. There would seem to be scarcely a hint of Bach treating the religious realm as he did the political, of offering praise out of duty rather than belief, or of demonstrating the raised eyebrow and ambiguous lips of the Haussmann portrait. There is a certainty in Bach's harmonies. However much they meander into painful realms, the foundation is never left behind.

Moreover, the texts themselves are never subordinate to technical aspects of the music. In fact, they determine the music's central figurations. In the common practice of the period, the music *paints* the texts being set, illustrating them, commenting upon them, knowing its own laws are subordinate to the word. This means that words like "descent" are illustrated with descending melodic lines. Relations between meaning and musical sign can become still more intricate. Sometimes the music intentionally bears mystical or numerological meanings—a bass line, for example, repeated 13 times, underscoring the tragedy of the "Crucifixus" in the *Mass*. And always in the vocal music, there are the chorales—the heart of Lutheran music—which Bach harmonizes and reharmonizes, treating them with as much care as if they too were sacred texts. Scores also bear dedicatory abbreviations, wholly sincere, like "S.D.G." ("Soli Deo Gloria," To god alone be praise) or "J.J." ("Jesu juva," Help me,

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Jesus). Bach writes that even so rudimentary an element of music as the figured bass—the fundamental bass line to be filled in by the player—merits such attention. In instructing his pupils, he wrote: "Like all music, the figured bass should have no other end and aim than the glory of God and the recreation of the soul; where this is not kept in mind there is no true music, but only an infernal clamor and ranting."

WHAT THEN of the clamor and ranting that comes of Bach's own life? And what are its echoes in the music itself? Theodor Adorno noted that if we treat Bach simply as an archaic man of faith, we have missed the most important aspect of his music: it is a product of its time, anticipating the Enlightenment even as it seems to nestle itself in formal rigors.

Even the work that would seem furthest from the Enlightenment—the *B minor Mass*—acknowledges the new age by attempting to swerve away from it. The *Mass* was written over a period of 20 years; its Credo is now believed to be one of Bach's final works. It is deliberately archaic, orthodox, exaggerating aspects of formality and faith. Bach divided the Credo text into nine sections, grouped into a trinity of three parts each. There is also a formal symmetry around the center group of three, with the Crucifixus lying at its heart. That tripartite center is framed by two arias: "Et in unum Deum" (I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ) and "Et in Spiritum sanctum" (And I believe in the Holy Ghost). Each chorus is suffused with numerical symbolism and pictorial references, so that in "Et incarnatus," for example, the pulsing three tones of the bass line shift upon the words "and was made man"; the breathing sighs of the violins descend, and become incarnated, musically, in that low-pitched earthly realm, like the described movement of the Holy Ghost. Such a musical symbol is not subliminal. It can, in performance, elicit a gasp, as if the music itself had incarnated a spiritual idea and was presenting it, not for appreciation, but as the simple truth.

This gives the Credo an orthodoxy and a seriousness far more extreme than the most impassioned cantatas. But even in this case, the effect of the music is far different from a simple assertion of faith. As the arias and the instrumental solos make clear, there is an *interior* world being presented as well. The communal fugues and proclamations of the choruses are contrasted with the meditative arias of personal belief that frame the central section of the Credo. "Et in unum Deum" is a duet in which the proclamation of belief in one god becomes a sensuous intertwining of imitative voices; similarly, the oboe duet in "Et in Spiritum" is lyrically intimate. The choruses of the central section—the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection—also convey a sense of human drama, sounding hushed and eerie at first and finally blazing forth with communal force.

All is so tightly controlled here that the tensions between individual and community, will and authority, sentiment and law, feeling and faith—all the tensions so evident elsewhere in Bach's music—are muted. The cantatas, though, celebrate those tensions, placing them at the core of Bach's religious music. The erotic arias between the soprano soul and bass Christ in *Cantata No. 140*, the variations on the single chorale theme in *Cantata No. 4*, the sharp contrasts between choral fugues and mellifluous arias in nearly all of the cantatas, show Bach moving constantly between the public demands of faith and its interior trials. In these works, as in the *Passions*, the style becomes almost operatic, dramatic, very different from earlier sacred works. The subject in much of Bach's sacred music is man—man in the particular—represented religiously in the figure of Christ. This shares certain elements with Pietism—the movement that attacked Lutheran orthodoxy, stressing personal and mystical devotion. There are anticipations of similar attitudes in other Baroque composers such as Heinrich Schütz, now celebrating his quadricentennial. But this religious emphasis on the individual links Bach more to the world that came after him than to the world that came before.

THIS IS TRUE even in the most serious secular works. The *Goldberg Variations*, as Glenn Gould pointed out, does not guide the listener through a structure or a narrative that develops in a certain direction. Instead, said Gould, it seems, despite its intricate architecture, to be "a community of sentiment" possessing "a fundamental coordinating intelligence which we [label] ego." It is the path of an individual will at play in the realm of musical structure. Bach is so sure of musical law that it grants him freedom. The canons at each interval are as ecstatic in spirit as the regularly appearing dance movements. And the *Variations*' piety is limited: the return of the magisterial theme at the end is preceded by a "quodlibet"—a playful interweaving of popular songs of the period, "*Ich bin so lang nicht bei dir g'west*" (Long have I been away from you) and "*Kraut und Rüben haben mich vertrieben*" (Cabbage and turnips have put me to flight). It has even been suggested that these songs refer to the theme itself. First heard at the beginning of the work, it returns an hour later; its foundations—its bass line and harmonies—have been transmuted and transformed, put in flight with sophisticated techniques that Bach may have modestly considered as commonplace as cabbages and turnips.

BACH'S musical style, in fact, may almost be defined as the play of an ego in a highly structured world. Such, for example, is the texture of the fugue, which seems to govern every note Bach penned. His fugues construct musical orders in which each individual voice is playfully free—maintaining its identity but capable of the most fantastical diversions—while having its position verified and reinforced by other voices. The fugue establishes a community of like minds and distinct parts, very different from the polyphony of the Renaissance, where the focus is less on individual voices than on the overall texture. It also contrasts with earlier Baroque fugues, where propriety and sobriety govern the behavior of the voices. Bach's achievement is to make each voice seem completely independent, while showing again and again their links, and even identities, with other free voices. Bach turned the Baroque fugue into a sign of the Enlightenment.

The fugue as used by Bach presents an order known not through faith, but through persistent examination and exploration. His themes are not mere organizations of musical material; instead they venture forth into the fugue fully formed, with shape and character and tensions all their own. Bach, it was said, could glance at a theme and, as if judging its character, tell immediately how it should be treated in a fugue—whether there should be stretti (multiple entrances overlapped in a short time), inversion (the theme played upside down), retrogression (the theme played backward), and so on.

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BACH ON RECORD

Most Bach playing may still be execrable: consider the "spinning wheel" textures of the most publicly acclaimed modern virtuosos (Jean-Pierre Rampal, Alexis Weissenberg, Pinchas Zukerman, virtually any conductor with any symphony orchestra). But Bach has become the most well-performed composer on record. Herewith, a prejudiced selection on the occasion of Bach's tricentenary:

In the last six months, Archiv has released a generous selection of its Bach recordings dating as far back as the 1950s, on budget-priced disks that lack only English liner notes. The selections range from the large-scale, subtly detailed cantata performances of Karl Richter and the classic organ playing of the great blind virtuoso Helmut Walcha to Nathan Milstein's noble version of the violin sonatas and partitas, and lyrical, idiosyncratic chamber performances by the Musica Antiqua Köln. Most are lush, modern performances; nearly all are elegantly musical, some profoundly so.

Teldec has similarly repackaged for budget collecting its important recordings of the authentic performances of Nikolaus Harnoncourt. These include an introspective *B minor Mass*, plangent *Easter cantatas*, the *Brandenburg concertos*, the *St. John Passion*. Harnoncourt is at once orthodox and impassioned.

Pro Arte records is releasing here the "Leipzig Bach Edition" of recordings from East Germany. Some are distressingly unfocused (Max Pommer leading *Cantatas 56* and *82*—M CP27062). Others are unusually rewarding, including "Music in the Bach Household" (M CP27065), and a recording of Hannes Kästner playing a recently built organ in Bach's own Thomaskirche (M CP27069). East Germany's musicians are traditional in style—living near the source and rarely traveling beyond it.

The Cantatas: Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Gustav Leonhardt have been involved in a nearly 20-year project, recording the complete 200-some cantatas in authentic performances, packaged with complete scores. Now well past the halfway mark, the recordings have helped redefine Bach performance style, bringing introspection and sentiment into the authenticity movement.

The Goldberg Variations: Glenn Gould (CBS M3X-38610). Here, in a boxed set, are two important performances, Gould's 1955 debut recording along with his 1982 rethinking of the work. These should stand alongside Wanda Landowska's grandly scaled performance (RCA AGM1-5251), and all of Gould's other Bach recordings.

The Well-tempered Clavier: Edwin Fischer (Vol I: EMI GR-70028-29—imported from Japan). This important piano performance from the 1930s is full of character and inauthentic nuance—a complement to Gould's pianistic Bach.

Ralph Kirkpatrick (five disks, available only through Quarry Communications, P.O. Box 3168, Stony Creek, Connecticut 06405). This re-release of the Deutsche Grammophon harpsichord version is transparent, restrained, and illuminating. The performance by Kirkpatrick's teacher, Wanda Landowska, is no longer available (originally RCA).

The Brandenburg concertos: Christopher Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music (L'Oiseau-Lyre 414 187-1) and Ton Koopman and the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra (Erato 751342) present two newly recorded authentic performances; parts of each would form a single collection giving brio and tension to these worn divertimenti.

The Violin sonatas and partitas: Sigiswald Kuijken (Harmonia Mundi 1C 3LP 157). This first successful authentic Baroque interpretation should be heard alongside Milstein's modern renderings.

Other recordings of note include: Karl Münchinger's lush, pre-authentic string version of the "Musical Offering" (London STS-15063); the Anna Magdalena Notebooks with Igor Kipnis and Judith Blegen (Nonesuch DB-79020), showing Bach as pedagogue; and recordings by harpsichordist, organist, and conductor Trevor Pinnock, whose freewheeling energy and rigorous authentic style exemplify the qualities that mark a renaissance in Bach performance.

E.R.

The theme's character is defined as a character by no other composer before Bach. The fugue thus becomes reflective as well as rational. A single voice explores and creates its own musical universe. The fugue as a style can be seen as a prelude, historically, to its own extinction in a style of "feeling," where one voice finds itself thoroughly alone, without such mirrorings and reflections and architectural structures; it wanders through sentiment and fantasy. The fugue and the canon began to seem archaic in the rococo world of Bach's sons. The canon could even seem, as C. P. E. Bach told Charles Burney, a "certain proof to him of a total want of genius." But C. P. E. Bach's successors in the Romantic era understood quite clearly the powers of canon and fugue. The most autobiographical music of the 19th century invokes the fugue in attempts to turn personal feeling into something more metaphysical, as in Beethoven's last piano sonatas or the finale to Liszt's piano sonata.

There is indeed something metaphysical about Bach's concern with the fugue: the belief that the world and the self are images of each other, that the word and music and the world are linked in their structure and their substance. Hence the nearly mystical concern with musical signs and symbols, from the most mundane illustration of joy with dotted rhythms to the use of themes with notes corresponding to the letters of Bach's name.

There is no way in this metaphysical vision to separate the world of daily life from a transcendent spiritual realm. So Bach did not think it at all peculiar to include in a book of music composed and collected for his wife, Anna Magdalena, a poem (attributed to him) about a most mundane pleasure. It is entitled "Edifying Thoughts of a Tobacco Smoker":

> Whene'er I take my pipe and stuff it
> And smoke to pass the time away,
> My thoughts, as I sit there and puff it,
> Dwell on a picture sad and gray;
> It teaches me that very like
> Am I myself unto my pipe.

Like the pipe, he is made of but earth and clay; like the pipe, which glows leaving ash, so will his fame pass and his body turn to dust.

> Thus o'er my pipe, in contemplation
> Of such things, I can constantly
> Indulge in fruitful meditation,
> And so, puffing contentedly,
> On land, on sea, at home, abroad,
> I smoke my pipe and worship God.

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Similar speculation suffuses Bach's musical universe. In his compositions, with their word-painting and affects and symbolism, metaphoric and metaphysical links are made between the most mundane and the most spiritual. The world is full of echoes and allusions. Nothing is arbitrary. Into this world comes the ego, the musical subject, Bach himself, whose work is craft rather than art because he does not create a world, he attempts to mirror it. In doing so, of course, he also catches part of himself. His presence slightly disrupts that metaphysical mirror because he begins to sense in his own peculiar position something awry—earthly hierarchies and authorities not quite matching the heavenly. So there is a double perspective: Bach serves, but he also serves himself. "J.J." (Help me, Jesus), he writes, but he also inscribes his own name musically in his final work. He is the voice in the fugues, the solitary individual ironically sensing his own freedom while remaining linked to a larger order. We can see him in the Haussmann portrait questioning, daring, stern and patient, and we can imagine him relishing his glass of port as well as his own skills, smoking his pipe and worshiping God.

ADVERTISEMENTS FOR HIS SELF

Mailer: His Life and Times
by Peter Manso

(Simon and Schuster, 718 pp., $19.95)

It has always been Norman Mailer's literary gambit to present his reputation as a problem to be solved by those who wish him well. He is a writer who has gone far by making things difficult for his admirers: he seemed to operate, in his days as a controversialist, on the understanding that if he did not make himself a little expensive, he would not be considered quite so valuable a property. But success at such a business depends on what one's admirers think they can afford, and these are not such happy times for controversialism. This big book once again flings the familiar basket of contradictions in the public's face, but one of the lessons of the rather indifferent reception it has so far been accorded appears to be that Mailer's reputation is no longer a problem anyone feels much like solving. And if we are not quite sure what to make of Mailer these days, it seems that Mailer, whose self-image has always depended on the reactions he provokes, is not entirely sure what to make of himself.

Mailer: His Life and Times is a frustrating literary object. It is too long, and like most books that are too long, it cannot seem to make up its mind about what it wants to say. Peter Manso, an experienced journalist and a friend of Mailer, has pieced together selections from interviews with some 150 admirers, relations, ex-admirers, ex-relations, and interested observers, apparently with the intention of letting these voices recreate, without the interposition of formal commentary, the story of Mailer's career in its historical context. This is a job far beyond the powers of mere recollection, and the result is a disproportion of everything. There is a great deal of gossip about who threw the first punch at whom at what Provincetown party, but most of the cultural history is delivered in the form of off-the-cuff remarks. Unmediated oral history is the record of the participants; those who decline or are not asked to contribute—in this case, four of Mailer's six wives—have to rely on the generosity of the rest. I think it is fair to say that, for the most part, the wives do not come off well.

Still, with all this material to work with, Manso has naturally had some successes. Mailer's mother, for instance—by all accounts a woman of extraordinary character—steals several scenes as only a mother can. ("I said, 'Norman, the language—will it be published?' And he would tell me I shouldn't worry. My only concern was it should be a success, because I knew he worked hard on it. Because then he would have money and be a recognized author and go and write other books.")

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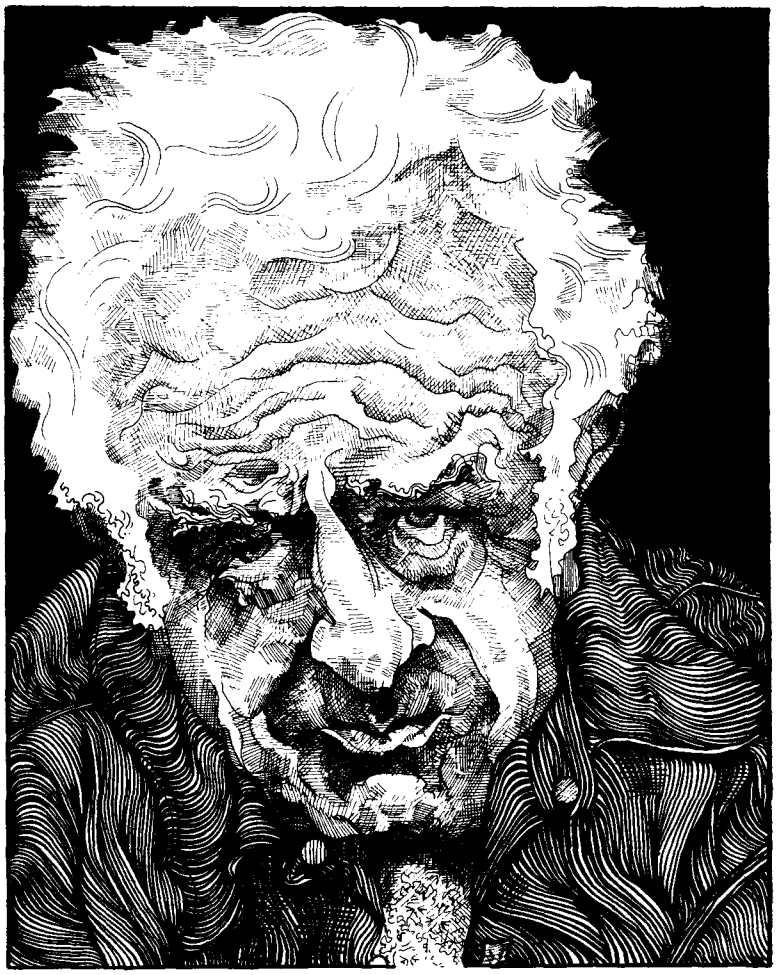
And the chapter on the 1950s includes an absorbing stretch in which the writing collected in *Advertisements for Myself* is made the center of a lengthy back-and-forth between various of the New York intellectuals (Irving Howe, Norman Podhoretz, Diana Trilling) and the Beats (Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure)—a kind of ad hoc debate about the origins of the 1960s. This imaginary dialogue is a remarkable feat of editing, but it requires more than a hundred pages to work itself out—a hundred pages one can't help feeling would have been refined, with not much lost that matters, to no more than 30 in a more traditional history. Manso cannot afford to be this generous with the intellectual life of other periods, and when he gets to the 1960s, the memories tend to revolve around the thumb-wrestling and the amateur pugilism and the cars and the stars and the many, many bars.

Mailer is, in any case, a nearly impossible subject for a biographer. Who could hope to improve on the account he has provided himself? Mailer's life and times are, after all, Mailer's great subject, and if one were to string together his omnibus collections—*Advertisements for Myself* (1959), *The Presidential Papers* (1963), *Cannibals and Christians* (1966), *Existential Errands* (1972), and *Pieces and Pontifications* (1982)—and to add selected portions of the political reporting and *Of a Fire on the Moon* (1970), one would have a history hard to beat for completeness and impossible to beat for moral nuance. For Mailer at his best is a writer in possession of an honesty once nicely described by Richard Gilman as "ravishing," and his version of the famous fiasco at the Ambassador Theater on the eve of the march on the Pentagon, his analyses of his own dubious contributions to the history of the television talk show, his account of the struggles over the publication of *The Deer Park* are performances it is pointless to rewrite.

Mailer's honesty, of course, has seemed to many people a literary excuse for poor judgment and for a hopeless incapacity for self-restraint, and it is on this issue that Mailer's admirers have had their work cut out for them. Conventional criticism prefers to keep what is written separate from what was lived—it's one of the ways of making the work of art a kind of risk-free zone for the dramatization of ideas and impulses thought to be too dangerous to be tried out in ordinary life. But it has also seemed like a way of making art inconsequential, and, as Diana Trilling observed many years ago, it is one of the critical decorums Mailer has done his best to ignore. He wants, like any strong moralist, to have his metaphors taken literally.

It is not easy to know how to respond to this challenge. We might want to say that if someone were not willing on occasion to play the fool, we would not have a very precise sense of the limits of civility. The speech Mailer delivered at the Ambassador Theater explaining his difficulties in the men's room, for instance, has the literary function, when we read it in the opening pages of *The Armies of the Night*, of parodying the paranoia of the antiwar movement, of registering a protest at the prudery and high-mindedness of antiwar liberalism, of showing our narrator at his worst so that we may appreciate his nobler moments with a due sense of proportion. But it is also true that for the people in the Ambassador Theater hoping for some helpful advice on strategy for the next day's march, how Mailer might put his behavior to later literary use was not an especially timely consideration.



NORMAN MAILER BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

But this is not, of course, the toughest case. The feature of Mailer's thought that has given the most trouble to readers who have wanted to take him as seriously as he asks to be taken is his fascination with the psychopathic personality. It is obviously not a detachable item. "Nothing less than . . . a revolution in the consciousness of our time" is the famous ambition announced in *Advertisements for Myself*: Marxism turned upside down, but Mailer did not mean it as a metaphor. "It is not only the 'dead weight of the institutions of the past' but indeed the inefficient and often antiquated nervous circuits of the past which strangle our potentiality for responding to new possibilities which might be exciting for our individual growth," runs the argument of "The White Negro." And the Hipster is thus described as "a philosophical psychopath," the term for a breed of persons who "are trying to create a new nervous system for themselves." Psychiatry does not know how to deal with the psychopath because psychiatry is in the end interested chiefly in social decorum; the mysteries of psychopathic possibilities are properly a subject for the novelist. And the

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eight-part novel announced at the conclusion of *Advertisements* was apparently intended to begin the work of unveiling.

THAT NOVEL was never written, of course, but Mailer's faith in this brand of revolutionary biology became the basis for his enthusiasm for and, at the end, his disappointment in the 1960s. Two things happened to make trouble for this view: they didn't cause Mailer to give it up, but they caused many people to give up Mailer. The first was the women's movement, and the second was Jack Abbott.

Mailer mistook the women's movement for an attack on sexuality, and the women's movement mistook Mailer for a good old boy. This was not without some measure of calculation on both sides. A good deal of the buffoonery and name-calling—the Town Hall debate in which his principal antagonist was Germaine Greer, for instance—was a show most of the parties were happy to engage in: it was good for literary business. But *The Prisoner of Sex* (1971) is a confused and finally an uncomprehending book. It begins by taking all the issues of feminism and relocating them to the bedroom. This seems reductive, but it is potentially a brilliant rhetorical move, for it puts the argument on the novelist's home court and allows it to be carried on not in the bloodless vocabulary of social science but in the more potent and disruptive language of sex. It is a way of taking the matter seriously. But for Mailer, the language of sex is not just a better vocabulary: it is the language of the true metaphysics. And by the book's last chapter, he has become the prisoner indeed of all the Victorian hygienics implicit in his view of the body: its law is the law of the cosmos. If you cheat it—by masturbation or by contraception or by denying the difference a womb makes—you are cheating life, and you will not get away with it. Feminism's best answer to this is simple: of course having a womb makes a difference, but the existential values we ascribe to that difference are as much a matter of metaphor as anything else is; if we change the metaphor a little, we might find some of the consequences liberating. There are psychic costs, to be sure, but the notion that there are cosmic costs is (as they used to say in the 1960s) one of the myths of the oppressor. It is by such twists in the argument that old revolutions in consciousness are unmade and new ones are begun.

The Abbott affair has, in retrospect, a scripted quality that is a little spooky. For many people, *The Executioner's Song* was the script. I think this is unfair to Mailer's book—though we can guess what Mailer's interest in Gilmore was, we are not compelled to share it to admire what he has written. But the complaint is not without point. That Mailer acted in what he thought were Abbott's best interests when he wrote on Abbott's behalf to the parole board, that he realized even before the murder of Richard Adan that he had misjudged Abbott's character and has been willing to admit that he misjudged it, that he has accepted publicly whatever share of responsibility can be fairly said to be his, are things to be taken into account. What is most disturbing about Mailer's part in the affair is his insistence on attributing his error in judgment to an excessive devotion to the idea of art. "Culture is worth a little risk," is the phrase he used in his press conference after the Abbott trial. Risk to whom? the press wanted to know—to waiters and Cubans? The notion that the impulses that led Abbott to self-expression were somehow bound up with the impulses that led him to violence is part of Mailer's view of the strong personality, and a notion he has evidently found it impossible to qualify. It is just this kind of aesthetic absolutism that, by claiming for art a consequentiality of such transcendent importance, makes art for many people a matter of no consequence at all.

THESE contretemps—and a certain impatience with the Marilyn books—have cost Mailer some of the best part of his audience. Though it has been much praised, *The Executioner's Song* is still underappreciated by readers who find themselves unable to separate the subject of the book from Mailer's own views about violence. This is a pity. *The Executioner's Song* is not a celebration of a killer; and its real hero is a woman—Nicole Barrett—who is one of the most remarkable and sympathetic female characters in American literature. But Mailer's status as a cultural figure is also something of a problem these days for the ironic reason that the popular culture's taste for behavioral extremes has now far outstripped his own. Ideas that were part of a new and difficult moral vision in 1959 have be-

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come the stock-in-trade of the purveyors of commercial culture. It is a little lesson in cultural history to read some of the interviews Mailer has given over the past ten years or so—to watch him trying to keep up with *Rolling Stone*'s Richard Stratton in speculation about why the American press has given Charles Manson such a bad rap ("Well, as an intellectual he was brave," is one of Mailer's contributions to the discussion); or venturing the thought, in the face of Stratton's genuine bewilderment, that there might possibly be something calculated about Mick Jagger's Satanism; or declining to specify for *Puritan*'s unflappable interviewers (there are no moralists so smug as the moralists of hard-core porn) exactly what sexual fantasies "get you hot." Mailer is a thinker who needs a wall of provincialism to bounce his ideas off; but where there is no sin, there is no mystery, and polite curiosity has replaced shock as the culturally indicated response to an outrageous suggestion.

But if Mailer is a writer who commands large funds of forgiveness, it is a grace well-earned, for he has been more than generous with his talents for many years. He is one of the few real virtuosos of American letters. He has left his mark on nearly every literary form—on not only the novel in most of its contemporary guises, but even more dramatically on the literature of fact, where the range and variety of his achievements are unequaled.

The most influential of his work may be the political reportage—influential both because it showed other writers what could be done by describing the *experience* of covering a political event, and because it taught a new generation of readers how to look at a politician. We ordinarily think of the New Journalism as involving some sort of crossing of fact with fiction in violation of the laws of genre; but Mailer has made sporadic efforts over the years to dissociate his own political writing from this conception. His own intuition, he says, was that "the world (not the techniques but the *world*) of fiction can be brought to the facts of journalism," by which he appears to mean not that he invented what he could not see (he is, it hardly needs to be repeated, the most scrupulous of observers), but that he found characters and plots where there had once been only spokesmen and agendas.

"Superman Comes to the Supermarket" (1960), that remarkable reportorial debut, can scarcely conceal its own glee at the possibilities opened up by the discovery that John Kennedy might be treated as a character in the novel of contemporary life: JFK as a ski instructor, as a college professor, as a movie star, as a Hipster. But it is the description of Lyndon Johnson in the same piece that deserves to live in every memory book of the 1960s:

> [He] had compromised too many contradictions and now the contradictions were in his face: when he smiled the corners of his mouth squeezed gloom; when he was pious, his eyes twinkled irony; when he spoke in a righteous tone, he looked corrupt; when he jested, the ham in his jowls looked to quiver. He was not convincing.

One therefore knew exactly what Mailer meant when he offered, in *The Village Voice*, this sentence as his explanation for his decision to vote for Bobby Kennedy instead of Kenneth Keating: "He has finally a face." It is a new language for politics, the language not of the editorial page or the lectern but of the street corner and the bedroom: it is the language of love.

EVERYTHING in Mailer's writing seems charged in this way because he has the optimism of the apocalyptic imagination: he can imagine a time when everything will no longer be the same, and all his plots, novelistic and journalistic, end up pointed toward some enormous possibility whose features are not quite legible. It is a habit of mind that sometimes leads to self-parody ("the Beatles," he muses somewhere, "—demons or saints?"). But Mailer is usually at his sharpest when he catches a glimpse of his own obsessions at work and makes the recognition a part of his anger—at the world for being less than his best thoughts would wish it, and at himself for being foolish enough to care so much.

With *Ancient Evenings* Mailer's career has taken a curious turn, and the last chapter of Manso's book makes an unsettling finish to the story. Mailer's social life these days is centered on the Upper East Side, where he has evidently been found a congenial ornament for the dinner table. Alice Mason, one of Mailer's hostesses, helps us to understand what this new life is all about:

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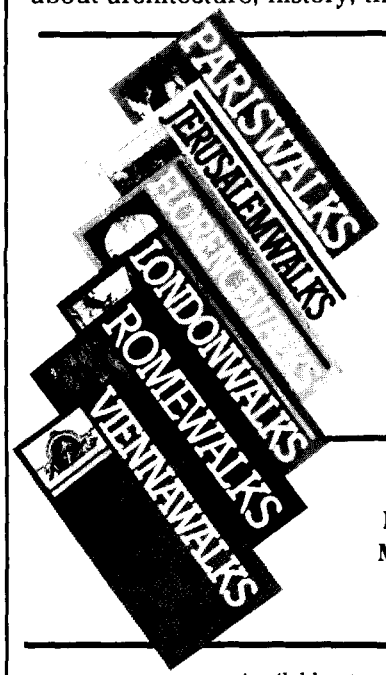

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People know how hard it is to achieve in New York, so every achiever recognizes other achievers. Money per se is not the issue. Take Henry Grunwald. He's a very intelligent man, the head of Time, Inc. Who cares if it was handed to him? He's doing something, he's an achiever. You can say JFK had it handed to him, but he too was an achiever. And Norman certainly fits this standard.

And the last series of interviews in the book is with Jason Epstein, Mailer's editor at Random House, where he has a four million dollar contract for his next four novels; Walter Anderson, the editor of *Parade* magazine, for which Mailer has lately written some pieces; and Leo Lerman, who as editor of *Vanity Fair* paid $50,000 for the serial rights to Mailer's most recent novel, *Tough Guys Don't Dance*. It is the consensus among these observers that Mailer is now entering the most fruitful phase of his career.

Who would want to disagree? "People think they've found a way of dismissing me," Mailer warned an interviewer a few years ago, "but, like the mad butler—I'll be back serving the meal." What will he serve, though? Perrier with a twist? These are clean-living times, and clean living has not been a subject Mailer has usually given his best attention to. Still, even the most self-satisfied of times have their stories, and it does not seem too improbable an expectation that Mailer may somehow find a way to tell them. He has, after all, a face.

LOUIS MENAND

Louis Menand teaches in the English department at Princeton University.

GUNS AND BUTTONS

Soviet Military Power 1985

(U.S. Government Printing Office, 143 pp., $6)

In his preface to this publication Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger could with justice have quoted the words of the fat boy in *The Pickwick Papers*: "I wants to make your flesh creep." The purpose of this document, quite obviously, is to portray the Soviet armed forces in such a formidable light that the Pentagon will have no difficulty in obtaining its budget requests from Congress.

Now in its fourth edition, *Soviet Military Power* provides a great deal of information about Soviet military doctrine, force structure, and weapons systems, and contains numerous photographs and an artist's impressions of Soviet weapons and military installations. Much of this information is not available elsewhere. Although the Soviet Union publishes a huge number of books and articles on military affairs, it does not make public the size of its forces, the characteristics of its weapons systems, or the numbers of weapons it produces each year. On these matters it is the United States government that is the chief source of information.

There is a wealth of data in this booklet on various aspects of the Soviet Union's military effort: on the operating areas of its missile-carrying submarines, the history of its ICBM programs, its operational concepts for war in Europe, the location of its nuclear warhead stockpiles, and more. Intelligence estimates must be assumed to have an element of uncertainty about them; still, as far as one can tell without access to classified information, the specific data presented here on weapons systems and force structure are substantially correct.

Some of the information is presented in a bizarre way. There is a striking drawing of the new SS-X-24 ICBM, ready for launching from a train. But deployment of this missile is not expected to begin until next year, and if a "rail-mobile" version is indeed deployed, it is likely to appear only in 1988. Yet even the Pentagon's artist's impressions can be revealing. If one assumes, for example, that the drawings of the Pushkino ABM radar and of the Krasnoyarsk radar—installations that are at the heart of the charge that the Soviets have violated the ABM Treaty—are accurate, one can deduce the radar's likely frequencies, and thus the missions for which they are most suited.

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But if *Soviet Military Power* is a mine of information, it is a mine that needs to be worked rather carefully. Some of its problems can be seen in the chapter on strategic defense and space. Of course it is no accident (to use a Soviet expression) that prominence is given to these programs, in view of the administration's own plans for strategic defense. It is clear that the Soviet Union, like the United States, is doing extensive research into defensive and space systems. But the analysis of the Soviet work is embedded here in a tangle of "coulds" and "mays" that make it look as threatening as possible to the United States. The section on laser/energy weapons systems, for example, starts by saying that "Soviet directed-energy programs involve future Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) as well as antisatellite and air-defense weapons concepts," and goes on to describe Soviet work on antisatellite and air-defense lasers. But it offers nothing more than speculation about the use of lasers for BMD, and thus provides no evidence to support its assertion about future BMD concepts.

The same chapter states that the Soviet Union is "developing a rapidly deployable ABM system to protect important target areas in the USSR," but does not provide convincing evidence for this assertion. Thus it states that Soviet phased-array radars, for example, "appear to be designed to provide support for such a widespread ABM defense system." But elsewhere it explains that these radars are part of a warning system designed to allow the Soviet Union to launch its offensive missiles under attack. Indeed, after reviewing the evidence for the development of a rapidly deployable ABM system, it concludes rather less categorically that the Soviet Union "may be preparing an ABM defense of its national territory."

LEDA AS LENA

One Version She Tells Herself

Blood I knew from my first menses, and force
vaguely, in uniform, or leashed, patrolling
the farthest edge of custom. Stockings concerned
me Sundays: white for decorous walking
that kept to the dry paths. My black too lumpy
with Fräulein Charlotte's mending.
Perfectly formed,
smoothed with much use, her wooden darning egg
fit nested to my palm, had never made
me vision birds in flight nor other pregnant
half-baked farrago.
Only new stockings.
And the park not the King's, but by the railway
and ours, the little people's, who walk up and down,
parading stiff hats and their knobby sticks,
properties, proprieties, customary as
respect for white stockings, hokey fur, feathers.

Bread crusts, cook's backdoor gift to ducks and swans,
and I the child holding the bag. I smell
collusion there. I fed ambitious strivers,
town fathers who had set those birds to course
past tall grass, not native, herbaceous borders,
and willed false calm above the bulldozed pond,
its lulling ripples, tinted chromo sunset.

My path, cook's crusts, odor of bread and grasses,
never for a moment to stretch the limits
of a usual girlhood's circumscribed desire.
Spun sugar I yearned for, pralines in a
heart-shaped, bowtied box, secrets, to feed
myself all by myself and—as I said—
new stockings.
Never that bird the Burghers
extend their sticks to show, sigh Sunday pleasure
and sentiment enough to pop their buttons
from swelling rooster throats,
explode, Ah Beauty!

So I obeyed. I did as I was told.
Remained the good girl, if apprehensive.
Fräulein C.—trained governess that she was—
smiled her encouragement. Children had always
been walked through parks, civilized to civic
duty for dormant soul's sake, feeding stale bread
to waterfowl.
I extended my crust,
neither gracious nor graceful, but feeling
forced before I'd known force, fatigued and fooled
even before befouled, half-absent, waiting
for the giant bird that hissed and waddled,
beating its clipped wings, and coming at me.

Fiery nostril, black bill, ripped my Sunday
stockings I'd wished to lose.
Bitter hacked loss
loosened me, desolate. I fell on thorns,
malodorous leaves, sharp gravel. I cried aloud,
screamed terror at the trumpeter pervert,
and the promenaders grinned, embarrassed,
but slyly pleased to judge. For them I added
spice to *Natur*. They passed on titillated,
self-ruminant, around accustomed dinners.

Blood soaked my tattered stockings.
Force that tore
wore flightless wings, tramped mud. Fräulein opined
she thought I'd have known better. That my fall
should teach me never to make teasing gestures
at wildlife in the park. She dried my tears
and grumbled, doomed to customary labor,
washing and stitching, setting right what could
be gossiped, glossed, embellished, told again,
and longest told, least mended.
For myself,
I hate the whole conception: how its four
stillborn beauties that click eggshell eyelids,
brandish stumpy arms, squeak *Mamma*, and dissemble
a fictive breath, abort all imagings.

ANNE HALLEY

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The Pentagon clearly wants to win support for the president's Strategic Defense Initiative by conveying the impression that the Soviet Union is engaged in the development of an exotic "Star Wars" system, and that it is preparing to deploy a nationwide ABM system of the traditional type. But in its enthusiasm to create this impression, *Soviet Military Power* omits to do several important things, and these omissions greatly reduce its usefulness in informing American policy debates.

There is no discussion, for example, of alternative explanations for Soviet activities in the area of strategic defense. Yet these activities can be interpreted not as an attempt to develop and deploy either an exotic or a conventional nationwide ABM system, but rather as the pursuit of more limited goals. Such goals would include the provision of defenses in areas not covered by the ABM Treaty (air defense, antisatellite weapons, and limited ABM deployment around Moscow); a hedge against American technological progress; and an exploration of new technologies with potentially important military applications. Nothing in this book contradicts such an interpretation; still, it is not even considered here, though it might have a bearing on American decisions about what appropriate responses to make.

NOR DOES *Soviet Military Power* make an attempt to assess the Soviet capacity to develop effective defenses. The Soviet Union has a research program in "Star Wars" technologies, similar to the American program as it exists now. No evidence is presented here to show that Soviet research is more advanced. Moreover, there is no discussion of the other technologies that a "Star Wars" system would require: data processing would be crucial, for example, and this is an area in which the Soviet technological base is generally weaker than the American.

Still, one can never be sure about Soviet intentions, and it is therefore prudent for the United States to pursue a policy that would make Soviet ABM deployment less likely, and also lessen its harmful effects if it should occur. This could be done by keeping abreast of the relevant technologies, and developing "penetration aids," such as decoys that would confuse radar, and so enable the warheads to get through any defense—exotic or conventional—that the Soviet Union might deploy. Such a program would be different from the SDI in scope and would not require the development and testing of an ABM system or its components. It would nevertheless be a perfectly rational response to Soviet activities. It is a major weakness of *Soviet Military Power* that it does not move beyond trying to evoke shock and horror at Soviet activities to provide the kind of analysis that would serve as a useful basis for deciding on American policy.

After the chapters on Soviet military power it comes as rather a surprise to read, in the chapter on the administration's response, that the Soviet Union, if faced with effective defenses, would have a strong incentive to negotiate reductions in offensive missiles: "The end result will be improved stability, a reduction in the likelihood of war, and a safer world." This optimism seems totally at odds with the earlier analysis, in which it is rightly stressed that the Soviet Union attributes great importance to its ability to inflict nuclear strikes on the United States. It is hard to see, therefore, why the Soviet Union should agree to reduce its offensive forces. In fact, it is much more likely to develop countermeasures in order to reduce the effectiveness of the defense; but no attempt is made here to assess the Soviet capability to develop such countermeasures on the basis of its existing strate-

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gic offensive and antisatellite weapons programs.

This failure to discuss countermeasures may spring from a general reluctance evident throughout the book, to consider the effects of American actions on Soviet policy. The chapter on forces for nuclear attack, for example, describes the development of new mobile ICBMs, SLBMs (sea-launched ballistic missiles) with multiple warheads, long-range cruise missiles, and a new strategic bomber, without any reference to American policy. But these new systems have to be understood, at least in part, as a response to the United States's development of missiles that are capable of destroying Soviet ICBMs in their silos. The Soviet Union is particularly vulnerable to such a threat because it has had about 70 percent of its strategic warheads on silo-based ICBMs. Hence it is diversifying its strategic offensive forces.

In the end, however, Soviet policy cannot be understood merely as a reaction to American actions. Even while diversifying its strategic offensive forces, the Soviet Union will retain its ability to threaten American silos. As *Soviet Military Power* points out, the Soviet Union wants to be able not only to retaliate after an attack, but also to preempt an attack if it thinks that war is inevitable, or to launch its missiles on warning of an attack.

Soviet Military Power rightly pays particular attention to Soviet preparations for nuclear war. But because the effectiveness of these preparations is not assessed in a systematic way, one finds some rather vacuous judgments about the Soviet view of nuclear war. It is said, for example, that "the Soviets believe in a rapid and efficient transformation of their peacetime national security organization into an operational command capable of successfully achieving all major political and military objectives in the event of general war." No doubt they do believe this. Still, the important questions are, can they do it, and do they think they can do it?

THESE questions receive only an indirect answer here. At one point it is noted that the "Soviet leadership recognizes the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war"; at another, that "realizing . . . the uncertainty of warfare once nuclear weapons are employed, Soviet military leaders have developed an operational concept designed to win a war before the enemy can use nuclear weapons." These statements undermine the idea that the Soviet leaders believe they can fight and win a nuclear war in any meaningful sense. They indicate, rather, that even while preparing for nuclear war, they recognize that the prevention of such a war must be a major goal of their policy.

The complicating factor of human nature is omitted from this official analysis of military power. There is a great deal about weapons and force structure, but very little about the officers and the soldiers who operate the weapons and make up the military units. Nonetheless, it is useful to have the information in this book in the public domain. It is hard to quarrel with the picture that emerges of a formidable military machine that could, if set in motion, wreak unimaginable destruction. But *Soviet Military Power* suffers from a serious defect; in striving to make our "flesh creep," it fails to give a clear picture of the issues that the United States must address in its military relationship with the Soviet Union.

DAVID HOLLOWAY

David Holloway is the author of *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race* (Yale University Press).

DOWN IN NEW ORLEANS

Lives of the Saints
by Nancy Lemann
(Knopf, 143 pp., $13.95)

The Sioux
by Irene Handl
(Knopf, 344 pp., $15.95)

Here are two novels that take place in New Orleans—one new, one a reissue of a book published 20 years ago. What links them, though, is not their settings (which for all purposes might be at opposite ends of the earth) but their intentions. Both create societies. Both present small pockets of humanity in terms so fresh and so quirky that these characters seem not so much described as invented for the first time.

Of the two, Nancy Lemann's is clearly the more mindful of its locale. Maybe the scenes in *Lives of the Saints* could have happened someplace else, but it's difficult to think where. There is a sense of New Orleans as a kind of drug, an ether. Its citizens are dazed with heat and with the constant flow of alcohol and the smell of tropical flowers. They are determinedly Southern: gentle, courtly, funny, charmingly hopeless. They are always "falling apart." " 'I'm falling apart,' Claude announced calmly," and " 'People fall apart easily here,' " and " 'Tell me about your breakdowns. That's what we're all about down here.' "

Or look at Henry Laines's wedding:

> Everyone had breakdowns at this wedding. Including the bride and groom. Especially the bride and groom. Crowded parties like at the Stewarts' often can be known to Bring On Breakdowns. Especially if the Stewarts are the hosts.

That wedding opens the book, and when you read about it you're not yet in step. You imagine something will come of it, that there's a reason for the breakdowns and for mentioning the wedding and so forth. Well, there's not. Bit by bit you catch on; you relax; you become a little dazed yourself. And that's when you start to have fun.

Think of *Lives of the Saints* as a long poem—a hysterically funny poem that is also beautifully written, if you can imagine such a thing. It doesn't exactly tell a story. It violates all kinds of rules. (The narrator, for instance, is part of the events but never fully explains herself; she's both there and not there, and on at least two occasions describes scenes from which she was absent.) Even so,

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the book works—perhaps because of its sheer exuberance, its enthusiasm for its characters, its peculiarly Southern habit of telling us not so much *what* happened as to *whom*.

Each person here has one special quality—one mania or comic flaw to which he clings as if it were his most precious personal possession—and this quality is unchanging. If a woman is known to be fond of discussing the hat she wore when she was 16, then any time we read of her she will be discussing that hat. It's a form of characterization that's larger than life; it's what gives the book its dash. Henry Laines has a tendency to scream, "BECAUSE I LOVE YOU, GODDAMNIT!" and that's what he does, straight through the book, whenever he appears. A middle-aged man discourses consistently upon the frailty of females; another goes around reciting paragraphs of ancient Greek; an elderly woman, once a belle, tells over and over again "the story of the Countless Offers." And the child named Saint Collier sails serenely on an endless stream of catastrophes:

> Saint was the type of child who is accident-prone, always falling out of trees or breaking his head open on furniture. He was often at the emergency room, where he would, obliviously, drink Cokes the whole time, to satisfy his craving thirst for carbonation.
>
> Southerners need carbonation. Especially when they are growing up.
>
> Saint Collier was so accident-prone that he was quite famous for it, and when his friends came over they contracted this propensity from him and fell out of trees or sprained their limbs. Frenzied mothers often went to the emergency room from the Colliers' house with a small, bloody, hilarious child in the back seat of a car swilling Cokes.

That passage is a good example too of Nancy Lemann's writing style, which uses repetition to great advantage—again, much like poetry.

> We walked to the macabre Mirror Lounge of the Palmetto Inn, which was populated by a group of toothless old men. A mysterious toothless man kept buying me beers. The waitress kept bringing me beers, ones I did not order. I would say, "Oh, I'm sorry—I didn't order a beer," and she would smile and point to the bar behind her, where there was a row of grinning, toothless old men.
>
> I appeal to toothless old men. To toothless old men, I am particularly appealing. The bar was filled with grotesque old men, wrecks and grotesques, the type I appeal to, and the type Claude loved.

The effect is to deepen our sense of the lush, sleepy atmosphere. The extravagant language deepens it further: that "small, bloody, hilarious child," for instance, or the "wildly crestfallen" expression on a woman's face, the "violently pretty" spot on the corner of Indulgence and Religion Streets, the "madcap palm trees." Words are slung about recklessly, piled in staggering heaps, and what emerges from them is an almost hypnotic portrait of unforgettable people in a strange and magnificent city.

THE PEOPLE in *The Sioux* are unforgettable too—if for very different reasons—and they too live in New Orleans. But it's more accurate to say that they *perch* there. They are who they are in spite of New Orleans, not because of it.

These are the Benoirs—a fabulously wealthy French horse-racing family that refers to itself as "the Sioux," with good cause. (Bear in mind that the Sioux were known for their fierceness.) To the Benoirs, New Orleans is not the haven it is for Nancy Lemann's characters but an inferior substitute; their real home is Paris. On the occasions when they're forced to occupy their Louisiana properties they spare no expense in maintaining the illusion that they're elsewhere, as a non-Sioux husband discovers while paying the household bills.

> There seems to be nothing worth buying in New Orleans except ice. A weekly 1000 lbs of it! Ice cubes aren't recognised by the Sioux.
>
> Everything else is flown over from France. . . . There are no cornichons à l'eau in New Orleans, no primeurs au premier choix. No savon de Marseilles, no eau de Javelle, whatever that is, no meat or poultry, though there seems to be any amount of milk and cream.
>
> Butter is flown over direct from Normandy in astronomical quantities.

That husband is Vincent Castleton, an Englishman who has recently married Marguerite Benoir and installed her in his house in New Orleans. The novel covers their first month together after the honeymoon. It threatens to be their last month as well.

By a previous marriage, Marguerite has a small son named George, also referred to as "Puss," "Moumou," and "the Dauphin." George is deathly ill with megaloblastic anemia and must be constantly pampered; but one suspects he'd be pampered even if he were in blooming health. He travels in the company of a gaggle of servants and an armed bodyguard; he takes his own sterilized crystal water glass when he goes on visits; he is force-fed with bière de la Meuse and foie gras. Amazingly enough, he's a likable little soul nonetheless. He is anxious and shy but very bright, and he displays the pathetic willingness to adapt that one often sees in the children of much-married mothers. Just look at the incongruous photo he carries around with his other treasures: a snapshot of himself, dainty and pallid, alongside his previous stepfather (Governor Davis of Mississippi) and a pack of gangling stepbrothers and a catfish and two coon dogs; an inscription reads, "Hi, Googleye! Big hello from But, Jeff, Hank 'n' Paw!"

Much of the book's vitality comes from the Dauphin's comic mixture of French and English and "Ole Kintuck." "O, my Redeemer!" he is likely to call out, and he tells the family monkey (yes, monkey), who refuses to urinate before a journey, "You, Ouisti, y'all will got to hold it naow, Grand M'sieu he don't stop for nothing on the road."

Having been won over by this child, then, we can only watch in horror as his narrow, miserable existence is unrolled before us. Marguerite, who adores her son, also harangues him unmercifully, bullies and belittles him, restricts his every move and censors his every word, and physically abuses him—on one occasion so badly that he bears the scars for days. Vincent, once he sees his wife's true colors, is sickened. Plainly the marriage cannot go on—but if he leaves her, who will protect the Dauphin? Certainly not the other Benoirs, who merely remonstrate with Marguerite in a mild sort of way.

IT'S A situation so full of melodrama (the fairy-tale-like wealth, the purely villainous mother) that, ordinarily, we'd be skeptical. That we're not is because in the very best sense *The Sioux* is an old-fashioned novel. It builds by tiny increments. Its events seem to grow of their own accord. A single-family supper lasts for 31 pages—or 40 if you count coffee in the salon. A nasty scene between Marguerite and a servant develops so gradually that we feel Marguerite herself must be surprised by her own bad behavior.

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Even the episode in which she does her child real physical damage just emerges; one thing leads to another. We might thoroughly dislike her but at least we believe she's human.

The Sioux is so far the only novel ever written by Irene Handl, a British stage and film actress now in her 80s. When the book first appeared, in 1965, Daphne du Maurier called it "superbly amoral." The term seems apt, although it's interesting to ponder just why. After all, every sin described here is acknowledged as such, is it not? There's even an observer—Vincent, the non-Sioux husband—to register the appropriate outrage at each of the Benoirs' many faults. So wouldn't "moral" be the word?

Well, no, for some reason. And possibly the reason is that the Benoirs are so brightly painted—their eccentric patois made so audible, their foibles made so colorful—that we're fascinated, open-mouthed. "Sure, sure," we tell Vincent impatiently, "we know they're a bad lot; but hush, we want to hear what they say next." No, amoral is the word, all right.

At one point, a grown male cousin sexually molests little George—and obviously not for the first time, and obviously with the rest of the family's tacit approval. There's been an uncomfortably seductive aura to the child all along, but when this episode with the cousin occurs it comes as a real shock, one of those things you immediately reread in disbelief because you think you must have misunderstood. In fact, I feel it was a mistake on the writer's part; it tips the scales a bit too far, makes the Benoirs seem monstrous in a way that even the mother's abuse did not. But the moment does serve—when you gasp and draw back—to demonstrate how deeply you've been pulled in by these people up till now.

The Sioux is chilling, but it has a hard, clear brilliance. *Lives of the Saints* is warming and endearing, brilliant in another way entirely. Both books will densely populate whatever room you read them in.

ANNE TYLER

IDEALISM AND INTERVENTION

Safe for Democracy: The Anglo-American Response to Revolution, 1913-1923 by Lloyd C. Gardner

(Oxford University Press, 400 pp., $25)

Only historians can rejoice when history becomes relevant. In light of current American policies toward Nicaragua, relevance is once again the fate of the troubling idea of intervention. Intervention can refer generally to any commitment of military force, economic assistance, or even political influence abroad. More specifically, it describes the effort to influence the outcome of a civil war or a revolutionary transformation in another country. Intervention raises at least two major questions: first, the moral dilemma of when it can be justified, and second, the pragmatic question of whether it will actually secure the objectives sought (assuming that a consensus exists on these objectives). One might expect that the historical record of a country that has frequently applied its power to foreign struggles (since 1945 in Greece, Korea, Guatemala, Lebanon, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Grenada) might have provided a virtual common law for judging intervention. But it turns out that precedent offers limited help. Intervention remains a political issue, a question of statecraft whose moral legitimacy and potential results must be judged afresh each time.

Still, history helps us to weigh the issues anew, even if it can never quite resolve them. For this reason Lloyd Gardner has written a challenging book; even as it elaborates earlier inquiries by Arno Mayer, Norman Levin, and others, it is original in its focus on two great statesmen's reaction to the wave of revolutionary upheaval during the era of the First World War. Despite profound differences in personality, Woodrow Wilson and David Lloyd George (along with Franklin Roosevelt) were the outstanding democratic spokesmen of the 20th century. Both were keen to mobilize their electorates against the redoubts of privilege defended by old aristocracies and new corporate barons at home, or militaristic dynasties abroad. Wilson was often rigid, but he understood how to tap America's diffuse, moralistic energies that are periodically available for public causes. Lloyd George was superbly opportunistic, playing on mass emotions ruthlessly to advance his career over the burnt-out elites of his once vibrant Liberal Party.

LIKE OTHER successful leaders in a democratic century, Wilson and Lloyd George understood some big truths, even if they left institutional shambles in trying to compel traditional politicians to accommodate to them. Wilson perceived the limits of alliances, proposed an international structure to achieve collective security, and felt acutely that the alternative to international reform must be revolution abroad and reaction at home. Lloyd George grasped the requirements of "total" war and then the need to reestablish international equilibrium by reintegrating Russia and Germany into the European comity. Unfortunately both leaders often scorned the patchwork arrangements, such as the entente with France, that would have served History less grandly than their long-range designs, but might well have impeded many subsequent disasters.

As Gardner stresses, the problems raised by foreign revolution wore down both men. The bracketing of the Mexican, Chinese, and Russian revolutions comprises the originality of this study; the fact that both leaders were reformers and not simple reactionaries provides its poignancy. The Russian revolution especially was a blow to liberal democracy—and at home as well, where it could stimulate the forces of reaction. Most of the narrative is concerned with how the two leaders sought to find an alternative to Bolshevik or socialist revolution in the face of overwhelming complexities. (Gardner might also have considered the challenge of Indian nationalism or the Kemalist revolution in Turkey, which

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defeated Lloyd George's overambitious Greek clients and finally exhausted Tory patience with his stalemated leadership.)

In a contrast with earlier revisionist authors, Gardner remains sympathetic to both leaders. Even as the president and prime minister became tangled in intervention, they sought to limit military involvement. Gardner stresses that both leaders comprehended the revolutionary pressure of accumulated social grievances. Nonetheless, the author's own democratic convictions seem to flag as he becomes caught up, with his protagonists, in the toils of banditry, warlordism, and social upheaval abroad, of contending bureaucratic and business interests at home. Almost grudgingly Gardner admits at the end that the reweaving of capitalist finance provided the social stabilization that was otherwise elusive. American money "appeared to have a greater force behind it than the revolutionary thrust that came from Russia."

THE author's ambivalence may well emerge from the very dilemmas of intervention. Why precisely should intervention cause such liberal soul-searching? Because it is wrong in itself, or because it is likely to fail? (The latter prospect seems the usual case. Still, not all searches for a liberal center need be doomed in advance; Duarte need not be Kerensky.) For Gardner, Wilson and Lloyd George epitomize the recurrent difficulty of finding a viable political base for liberal intervention in a revolution or a civil war that has eroded the parties of the center. Still, he sympathizes with their motivation, and he explicates its redemptive liberalism, which requires a significant historiographic effort after Vietnam.

If the political prospects of intervention militate for caution, what about the moral arguments? For some critics it can never be justified outside a framework of power politics. Nonetheless, it is appropriate to recall at the outset that intervention is a normal recourse in international politics. Few revolutions, if any, take place undisturbed within one country. Just as the loss of a war usually brings down a regime, or at least causes major social upheaval, so revolutions usually engender wars of intervention. Thucydides stressed the connection between war and revolution in the Hellenic world. The American Revolution provided the occasion for France to redress its losses of a decade earlier at the hands of Great Britain. A decade later France's own revolution arrayed the European powers and eventually the United States in a quarter century of warfare. Spanish dynastic upheavals in the 19th century and the civil war of the 1930s embroiled neighboring states in prolonged struggles. The Russian Revolution triggered several years of foreign-abetted civil war.

Indeed, staying out of a nearby revolution is a difficult task. If historians drop their traditional model of unitary states arrayed in an international system, and instead construe countries as living with perpetual divisions—much as physicists had to abandon a billiard-ball atom for concepts of particles within—then it is clear that the fissioning of one society must strain the institutions of the others. The bitter conflicts of a country in upheaval become a stake in the politics of spectator nations. Intervention becomes a compelling tactic for one party or another as much to firm up its domestic position as to set things right abroad.

Liberals in the United States, and their political kin elsewhere, have generally been more reluctant to intervene in foreign revolutions than conservatives or socialists. Liberals have tended to believe that each country is entitled to stage its own revolution. They generally have been willing to accept transitional restrictions on civil rights if the final outcome seemed to promise a "free" society. Yet even liberals (including Wilson and Lloyd George) have been impelled to abandon their initial position of nonintervention, often justifiably in light of their own values, when revolutionary regimes seem to perpetuate repression, or when rival outside agents have sought to steer events either to left or right.

OBVIOUSLY the issue of whether a revolutionary regime will steer toward democracy or dictatorship is a critical preliminary to thinking about intervention. It also involves intense political debate because there can be no clear answer, especially since the very act of intervention usually radicalizes a revolutionary coalition. The major objection to intervention is in fact that it advances the repressive trends it ostensibly seeks to forestall.

All the same, it would avail liberals little to make nonintervention an ironclad principle. To be sure, the casuistic debates about intervention that have left so many battle scars among liberals do not yield edifying consistency: Spain—yes, against fascists, no, against a Popular Front; Vietnam—no, against national Marxist revolutionaries; Nicaragua—no (so far), against coalitions still in the balance; Grenada—well, maybe yes, once extremist Marxists wiped out moderate Marxists, and in light of its puny size. Still, liberals cannot avoid these painful controversies by reliance on nonintervention as an absolute principle. At some point a wave of domestic revulsion may well undercut noninterventionists, even if they are truly prepared to stand aside no matter how a revolution may degenerate. Liberals must accept at least the theoretical possibility of intervention.

SHOULD liberals be prepared, then, to argue more ruthlessly that revolutionaries themselves cannot claim the right to be left alone or to choose their own sponsors? A revolution, after all, tests political equilibriums in many societies. It can hardly be an event limited to one country, any more than acid rain or extensive atomic bomb testing in the atmosphere. The implications of this view, however, must also be judged unacceptable when it is recalled that it underlies the "Brezhnev Doctrine," formulated to justify sending tanks into Prague in 1968, into Kabul in 1980, and to call Warsaw to order in 1981. Ultimately liberals must allow for the recourse of intervention to defend transformations they value, and they must equally claim the right to counteract those they believe are pernicious. This case-by-case analysis, though, means that liberals must also accept that intervention will periodically emerge as a divisive political issue.

The lesson of Lloyd Gardner's book, however, as well as of more recent history, is that most interventions tend to fail on pragmatic grounds. They undermine the very centrist forces that liberals would like to strengthen, and they escalate civil war to the point at which the liberals' home country decides it will no longer commit resources. Then those who consolidate power abroad are usually far more monolithic and authoritarian than the diverse coalition that presided at the beginning. Moreover, it takes a long time to judge the success of an intervention. If American intervention removes a radical specter in a given year only to provoke a hardened guerrilla movement a decade later, it can hardly count as successful.

What do we learn from the history of

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American liberal interventions, from Wilson in Mexico to Johnson in Vietnam? Even if in theory they were not all to be condemned, in practice they often proved disastrous. On the pragmatic side, Secretary Weinberger has recently drawn one lesson from these continuing difficulties, namely to intervene only when broad agreement at home is preexistent and then with overwhelming weaponry. But this recommendation sets impossible preconditions and then insists on a reckless use of force. The more appropriate lesson seems to be to weigh all alternatives with caution and without prejudice; to recall that unless one has a credible alternative set of candidates, benign neglect may well be less disastrous; and that if limited involvement fails, withdrawal can be rational. This is a stance that Woodrow Wilson might have found initially too tempered, but which his cumulative experience brought him to understand. Perhaps it provides an alternative between abnegation and Armageddon for his successors.

CHARLES S. MAIER

Charles S. Maier is professor of history at Harvard University.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 2*

tacks a debating partner of his own imagination.

JOSHUA MEYROWITZ
Durham, New Hampshire

Mark Crispin Miller replies:
As I demonstrated with a number of straightforward quotations, *No Sense of Place* persistently celebrates the rising influence of the electronic media. I did not accuse Meyrowitz of advancing a "utopian thesis." On the contrary, I made clear that his apology for the media is implicit, embedded in drab jargon. The author may not be wholly aware of his own bias.

Meyrowitz now claims to have raised many serious questions about the veracity and social value of the media. This is wild exaggeration. He does not "frequently discuss" the complex background of TV, nor offer "many arguments"—or even one—to subvert the notion that TV communicates reality. As I pointed out, he does qualify, in a perfunctory and thus unconvincing way, many of his own upbeat implications, in order to make his skewed analysis sound "balanced." That precaution has enabled him to quote himself as above.

THE NEW REPUBLIC'S BEST BOOKS

Following is a list of books TNR *has recently reviewed and recommends.*

Slow Homecoming by Peter Handke, translated by Ralph Manheim (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Three metaphoric and metaphysical parables. (Reviewed 6/17/85)

The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age by Walter A. McDougall (Basic). The story of the state, the scientists, and the exploitation of the galaxy. (6/3/85)

Money: A Suicide Note by Martin Amis (Viking). The manic monologue of a man who has everything but is nothing. (5/6/85)

Acts of Will: The Life and Work of Otto Rank by E. James Lieberman M.D. (Free Press). Another chapter in the history of psychoanalysis. (5/20/85)

Mountbatten: A Biography by Philip Ziegler (Knopf). The aristocrat as ambitious, accomplished statesman. (5/13/85)

Women and Angels by Harold Brodkey (The Jewish Publication Society of America). Two ordinary fragments of a long-awaited novel, and a third remarkable one: the portrait of a revelation. (5/20/85)

The Call: An American Missionary in China by John Hersey (Knopf). An unsentimental saga of one Christian's half-century in China. (5/13/85)

Irving Babbitt: An Intellectual Study by Thomas E. Nevin (The University of North Carolina Press). An intellectual biography of humanism's stern champion. (6/17/85)

The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams by Donald Spoto (Little, Brown). A thorough life of the carousing playwright. (5/13/85)

Home Truths: Sixteen Stories by Mavis Gallant (Random House). Portraits of Canadians at home and abroad. (5/13/85)

TRB, *from page 4*

surance rate increase takes effect. They all say they will resume if the legislature takes action against the lawyers.

It's impossible to believe that these doctors actually "can't afford" to practice, and would make more money by going out of business. The medical society president-elect as good as admitted that he and his colleagues are engaged in blackmail when he said that doctors around New York City won't be participating (even though their insurance rates are the highest in the country) because "there are so many physicians in the area, it wouldn't make any difference."

The idea of medical malpractice, like the rest of tort law, is that justice requires a wrongdoer to "make his victim whole." The victim of a botched operation can't really be made whole again, so money—the universal solvent—is used instead. But the malpractice system is a wildly inefficient engine of justice. On the one hand, the skills of lawyers and the natural sympathies of juries assure that many people collect huge sums when they are victims of nothing more than bad luck. What with the lawyers' fees and the cost of administering the insurance system, only an estimated 28 cents on the dollar goes to victims anyway. On the other hand, a recent Rand Corporation study concluded that only one true victim of malpractice in ten ever files a claim and only one in 25 ever sees any money.

Over a third of malpractice claims are filed by people who've already sued a doctor once before. The doctors are setting up a nationwide computer network to check people's litigiousness before they check their blood pressure. The reason malpractice insurance rates on Long Island are almost ten times what they are in South Carolina isn't that Long Island doctors are ten times more inept. It's that Long Islanders are ten times more likely to be or know a good lawyer.

Since the doctors are insured anyway, and since the measure in dollars of a victim's suffering is inherently arbitrary, litigation of individual cases is a waste of time and money. A proper system would compensate victims of botched medical care from a pool of money supplied by a levy on doctors, based on a standard scale of payments. If designed with care, such a system could deny millions of dollars to the lawyers without saving the doctors a penny. That's what I call a happy ending.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Dining with Dick

I WOULDN'T PASS UP a Celtics-Lakers championship game on TV for many people. Nor is traveling to New Jersey and back on a sleepy Sunday afternoon and evening just to have dinner with one fellow my idea of time well spent. But this dinner invitation was different. It was food, drinks, and conversation for three hours with Richard Nixon. As we—eight journalists from Washington—arrived at Nixon's home in Saddle River, the famous slightly stooped figure was visible through the tinted glass next to the front door. Before we could knock, he came outside to greet us and outline the plan for the evening: talk in one room, followed by drinks in another, followed by dinner, followed by a trip back to La Guardia in time to catch the last plane to Washington. Nixon's comments were supposed to be off-the-record. Of course Nixon, of all people, knows that nothing said in the presence of eight journalists is ever really off-the-record. But you won't find out from me who Nixon is touting as the dark horse for the Republican presidential nomination in 1988 and which of the tax reform plans he prefers. I was surprised at both of these, though. Nixon was quite formal. I don't think his remarks would have been any different (shorter perhaps) if the event had been on live TV. He came off as hawkish but not superhawkish on foreign policy and moderate on domestic policy. He admires President Reagan, particularly for his ability as a candidate, and talks to him roughly once a month. But Nixon sounded more centrist than Reaganite. Throughout, he kept looking at his watch. After an hour, he announced it was time to move to the living room for drinks, and seemed surprised that half of us asked for Perrier. Nixon continued to look at his watch as he talked, and soon we went for dinner. He scarcely ate a bite of the vichyssoise, roast beef, boiled potatoes, green beans with almonds, tomatoes stuffed with mushroom bits, salad, cheese and crackers, strawberries, and ice cream. Too bad; the food was great. He joked from time to time about his troubles with reporters and twitted us for having been neutralized by Reagan. Not a bitter word was spoken, but candor may have been the casualty in this. While we drank coffee, Nixon pulled up his sleeve to see his watch again and rushed us off to our plane. You'll have heard everything he said within a few weeks. Washington journalism is like that.

ONE WORD (not the only one) that comes to my mind about Nixon is "brilliant." You may think that is excessively kind when applied to a man who was forced to resign in a monumental scandal. But the word itself has acquired double-edged meaning in Washington. To be brilliant is also to be controversial and grating and confronted by many critics and enemies. Take the official in the Reagan administration most often described as brilliant, namely Richard Darman, once a deputy chief of staff at the White House and now the deputy secretary of the Treasury. Darman is one of the few intellectually scintillating people in Reagan's orbit. He was indispensable in developing Reagan's program in the first term, and Donald Regan is surely wrong when he says he doesn't need a Darman of his own at the White House. But my, oh my, does Darman draw darts. Remember, he's the guy who got most of the blame when Reagan bombed in the first presidential debate last fall. Darman managed to muscle his way into the strategy councils of the Reagan reelection campaign, where he was received with less than unanimous enthusiasm by some of the old political pros. The pros have their revenge in *Wake Us When It's Over* (Macmillan), the campaign chronicle by Jack Germond and Jules Witcover. They write that Darman "had heavy credentials as a policy implementer and bureaucratic maneuverer but none as a presidential campaign operative." Stuart Spencer, the senior guru, is quoted as saying it was easier to include Darman in strategy sessions than to deal with his frantic efforts to get where the action was.

ODD PIECES of political gossip come one's way in Washington. The trick is knowing how to interpret them. For instance, people on Capitol Hill and in the Justice Department and at the White House insist that Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah stands a chance of being nominated for the Supreme Court. Orrin Hatch? Well, he's a very conservative Republican who is, er, smart (I almost said brilliant) on legal matters. But why would Reagan need to tap a senator for the court when so many conservative federal judges are available? "Hatch would be so easy to get confirmed," an official said. "The Senate would have to go along with one of its own." This, according to my interpretation, is the best evidence to date that the president is losing his grip on Washington: even his aides and allies think he has to be accommodating in the extreme. Reagan won reelection in a landslide seven months ago, and now his own friends think he has to name a senator in order to get a new Supreme Court justice confirmed. The second-term blues have hit.

CAMP HOOVER, a cluster of three small lodges in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, is one of the garden spots run by the federal government. But don't get your hopes up about spending a weekend there. It's for officialdom and invited guests only—cabinet secretaries, senior White House aides, members of Congress, me. My wife and I were guests over Memorial Day weekend at Camp Hoover. I'm not going to tell you who invited us. It took us two-and-a-half hours to get there, and it was worth the drive. The place is named after Herbert Hoover, who used it as his presidential retreat, there being no Camp David at the time. He bought the land, had the government build the lodges, and got the Marines to cut a road. Nowadays, using federal funds to build a vacation spa would prompt a congressional probe. Hoover got away with it. Thank God he did. Camp Hoover is a marvelous perk, a place for family and friends to hike, fish, and ride horses. And the truth is, there aren't that many of these spots for the high and mighty—ones, that is, financed by the taxpayers. I know. I know. The political elite get plenty of other goodies: junkets, large personal staffs, etc. But I would argue that places like Camp Hoover are actually a government economy measure. They keep government big shots from wasting much, much more of the people's money to attend the Paris Air Show.

F.B.

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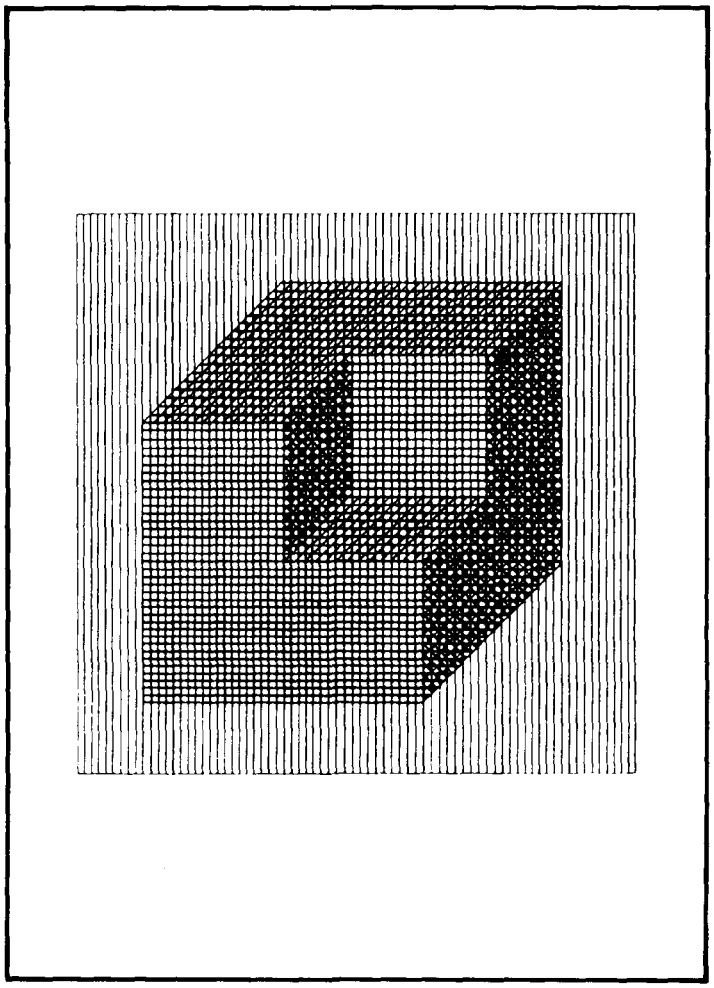

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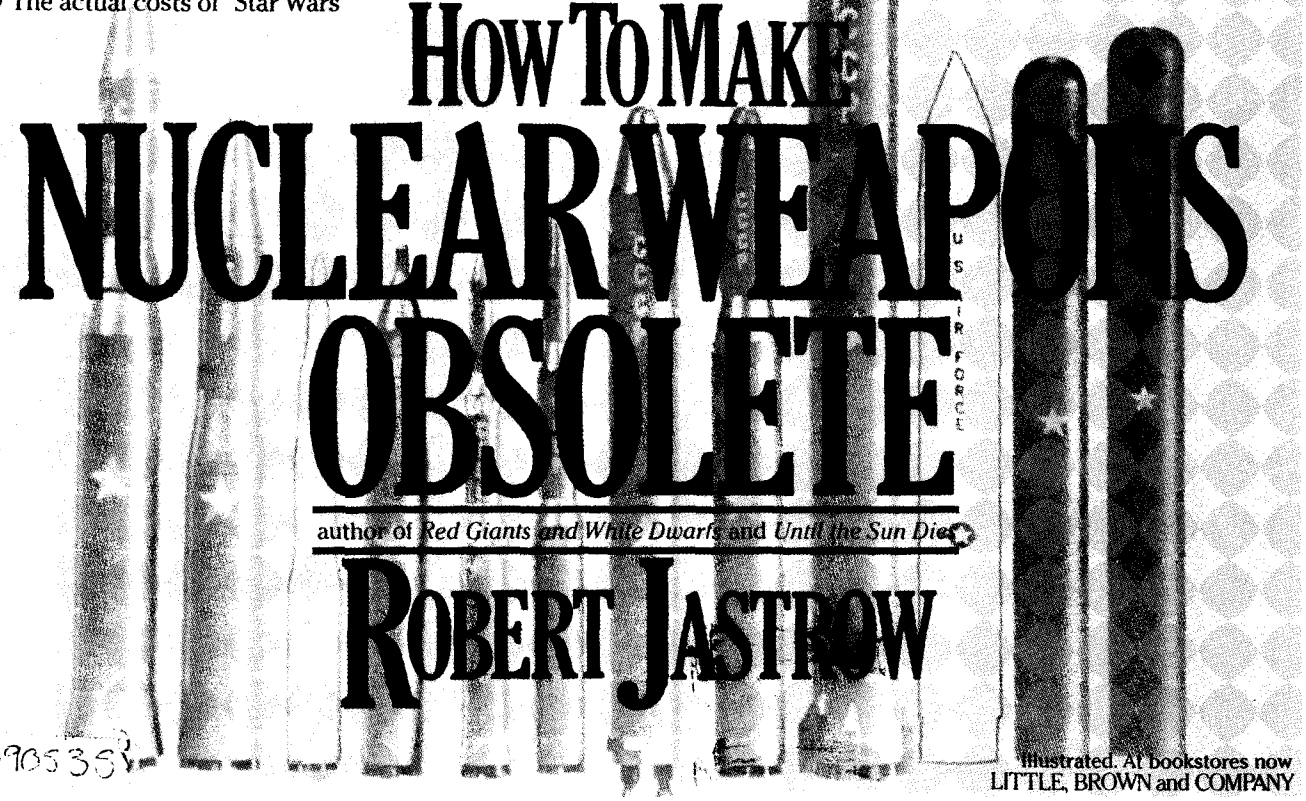

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